# THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

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# THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

EDITOR OF
'THE EXPOSITORY TIMES' 'THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE'
'THE ENCYLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS'
AND OTHER WORKS.

ASSISTED BY B. A. CLARK

## THE BOOKS OF DEUTERONOMY, JOSHUA JUDGES AND RUTH

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# THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

# THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

## INTRODUCTION

### I.

### Jesus and Deuteronomy.

AN Old Testament book is commended to our pecial interest when we find its words recur- ing in the pages of the New Testament. Deuteronomy makes a particular appeal to us long this line, inasmuch as we hear some of its pronouncements on the lips of our Lord Him- elf. To an inquirer who asked, 'Which is the hief of all the commandments?' Jesus replied y quoting in the first place a great utterance rom Deuteronomy as to man's love towards he One God (vi. 4, 5). These words from Deuteronomy still hold their unassailable place n the thought of Jew and of Christian, expres- ng a fundamental element in the faith and evotion of both.

But there is recorded for us a still more emarkable use of Deuteronomy by our Lord. t the outset of His public ministry we have view of Christ's inner life which shows Him have absorbed the teaching and temper of is most spiritual presentation of His people's aw. After He had accepted His vocation by ubmitting to baptism at the hands of John he Forerunner, He went into solitude to face e tasks of the future and consider the pos- ble ways to their accomplishment. The periences of this season of retreat are mmed up for us in the Temptation nar- tives of the Gospels (*e.g.*, Mt. iv. 1-11). here we see Jesus confirmed in His best ideals d nerved to resist unworthy methods by the pirit of God speaking in the words of Deuteronomy (viii. 3, vi. 16, vi. 13 and x. 20). These words seem to rise spontaneously to His lips as the expression of His antagonism to all ignoble aims and means.

Thus, to study Deuteronomy is to put ourselves into contact with that which our Lord Himself studied, and felt to be a channel through which the will of God became plain to His heart. In Deuteronomy Christ found the Law of His nation presented to His mind and conscience in a way that gripped Him. It was set forth with the vision and the persuasive urgency of the great prophets. Here was something that His spirit welcomed. Here was something to prize and to live by. Here was a Divine Law which He might carry on to its true fulfilment in ideals yet more exacting but also in motives more compelling.

### II.

### The Historical Setting of Deuteronomy.

THERE are two sets of historical circumstances in connection with which Deuteronomy has to be considered. These two historical situations lie some seven centuries apart and have as their central figures Moses and King Josiah of Judah. Let us look at each in turn.

1. *Moses and Deuteronomy.*—Deuteronomy is a law book, but it is not merely a book of laws. It has a certain picturesque and dramatic interest from the circumstances amid which its laws are promulgated. The Hebrew tribes have reached the plains of Moab in their progress towards Canaan. They have made

themselves masters of the country east of the Jordan. It only remains to cross that river and enter the promised land. But their leader is not to cross with them. By appointment of God it is 'thus far and no farther' for Moses. Before he takes his farewell of the people and sends them on into Canaan under Joshua, Moses declares once more the law of God for the nation. He reviews the events which have occurred since the departure from Egypt. He recalls the revelation of God's will made at Sinai, and in detail repeats and amplifies many ordinances. The name 'Deuteronomy' means 'a repetition of the law.' It is really due to a Greek mistranslation of xvii. 18, where the Hebrew words mean 'a copy of this law.' The Greek translation rendered them 'this repetition of the law' and 'Deuteronomy' is simply the Greek word which represents the last four English words. Although embodying a mistranslation, it gives an approximately correct description of the book, inasmuch as the laws which Moses is represented as conveying to the nation are in considerable measure those already conveyed at Sinai shortly after the beginning of the great enterprise of exodus and migration. When the laws have been announced and sundry exhortations, warnings and instructions given, Moses hands over the legislation in written form to the custody of the Levites. Next we have two poems the 'Song' of Moses and the 'Blessing' of Moses. Then the book comes to an end with Moses' departure from the midst of the people, his survey of all the land from the top of Pisgah, and his death in the mountain solitudes.

Such is the historical framework in which we are shown the legislation being brought to the knowledge of the people and laid upon their conscience. The interesting situation in which the tribes are as they await the order to cross the river, and the personal circumstances and fate of the aged Lawgiver, combine to make an impressive setting for the repetition and amplification of the conditions of God's covenant with His people.

2. *Josiah and Deuteronomy.*—Chapters xxii. and xxiii. of 2 Kings narrate an extraordinarily interesting event in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah of Judah, *i.e.*, the year 621 B.C. A law book is discovered in the Temple. Its contents provoke Josiah to consternation when he realizes that the life of his kingdom, especially in its religious aspect, is far from being ordered on the lines which this law book lays down as God's requirement. Josiah sets afoot a reformation based on the demands and ideals of the newly-found code. The details which we are given of Josiah's reformation show that it proceeded according to the regulations of the Book of Deuteronomy;[1] and the verdict of scholarship is practically unanimous that the 'book of law' which thus came to light in Josiah's reign, and constituted the basis of a renewed covenant between Judah and Jehovah, was, if not the whole, at least the central part (*e.g.*, chs. v.-xxvi., xxviii., or chs. xii-xxvi., xxviii.) of our present Deuteronomy. Josiah's action in abolishing all the provincial sanctuaries, or 'high-places,' and concentrating the worship of Jehovah in the Temple at Jerusalem, in destroying all idolatrous symbols throughout Temple, city, and country, and in prohibiting the worship of pagan divinities and of the heavenly bodies, is in harmony with the ideals and demands of Deuteronomy. Josiah's concern does not extend to the legal requirements of the Pentateuch outside Deuteronomy. His deep emotion is the natural result of the exhortations and warnings with which Deuteronomy combines and commends and enforces its laws.

Thus Josiah's reign presents us with a new historical background against which to view the legislation of Deuteronomy. We have now a setting of events in which we see certain parts of that legislation making a definite impact on the minds and life of the people, and passing with effective force into the religious development of the nation. Thereafter the ideals of Deuteronomy are those by which the best men appraised the spiritual condition and religious and moral conduct of Jehovah's people.

There emerges at this point a question of

[1] See Skinner's notes on 2 Kings xxiii. in *Century Bible*, and detailed list of correspondences in Driver's *Deuteronomy*, p. xlv., footnote.

supreme importance for our understanding alike of Deuteronomy and of the general development of Hebrew religion and legislation. If the age of Moses gives us the actual historical setting in which Deuteronomy came into existence, why do the laws of Deuteronomy not assert themselves and obtain due recognition until the age of Josiah? The history of Israel from the occupation of Canaan until Josiah's day does not show us Deuteronomy's principal and most characteristic laws in operation. It does not even show us these laws as the ideal according to which the religious life of the people was judged by Jehovah's most faithful adherents.[1] Can the code have been completely lost from the time of Joshua to the time of Josiah?

A careful consideration of the facts of Hebrew history and a minute study of the outlook, laws, and language of Deuteronomy lead to the conclusion that the age of Josiah, rather than that of Moses, yields us the conditions in or near which the book originated. Its laws and ideals are a true development or evolution from Israel's earliest legislation. They show that earliest legislation developed and adapted to the more complex conditions of a more advanced form of society. They are 'Mosaic' as the culmination of a process at the head of which Moses stands, as the later stage of a system developed under the leading of God's Spirit from its beginning with Moses. To detail and argue the proofs that Deuteronomy does not connect itself with Moses and his age in any more intimate or direct fashion, is not possible here.[2] But, as a transition to our next section, some of the main considerations may be briefly indicated in the words of Sir George Adam Smith.[3] 'The evidence for the late date of Deuteronomy consists of the perspective in which it views the time of Moses; its implication that the monarchy has long been in existence; its reflection of a more elaborate economy than is shown in the earlier legislation; its polemic against forms of idolatry prevalent in Israel during the Assyrian period; and (most of all) the testimony of the historical books that up to the end of the eighth century the religious practice of Israel neither conformed, nor sought to conform, to the Deuteronomic prohibition of pillars in the worship of Jahweh and insistence on a single sanctuary; while the appearance of such provisions just about this date is naturally explained by the events and processes in the previous history of Jerusalem which we have seen leading up to them, and by the practical necessities of the monotheism. Besides, Deuteronomy is clearly inspired by the eighth-century prophets. On these grounds the conclusion is reasonable that the code or codes from which Deuteronomy is compiled were constructed towards the end of the eighth or during the seventh century.'

[1] On this whole subject see Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 2nd ed., Lectures viii.-xii.

[2] See the question fully argued in Driver, *Deuteronomy*, p. xxxiv.-lxv.

[3] *Jerusalem*, ii. 208f.

## III.

## Composition and Sources of Deuteronomy.

THE book of the law on which Josiah based his reformation was 'found' in the Temple by Hilkiah the priest (2 Kings xxii. 8). We have seen reason to believe that it comprised at least the greater part, the central hortatory and legal sections, of our present Deuteronomy. How had it come to be where Hilkiah found it? How long had it lain unnoticed? Who was responsible for its compilation? These are questions easier to ask than to answer. But most probably the answer is to be sought somewhere during the eighty years previous to Josiah's perusal of the book in 621 B.C.

These eighty years cover a period of crisis and unsettlement both in the political and in the religious life of Judah. At the beginning of the seventh century we have the alliance of Isaiah and King Hezekiah in the shaping of the nation's destiny. The remarkable escape of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. from the fate meted out to the surrounding regions of Palestine by the Assyrian armies added to the prestige of Isaiah, who had insisted on the inviolable character of Zion. But Judah was now under Assyrian domination, and the influence of

Assyria seems to have made for religious confusion and degeneration throughout the years that followed. Hezekiah had made some tentative efforts at reformation by seeking to abolish high places and idolatrous emblems. Under the long reign of his successor, Manasseh, his work was more than undone. It was a time of religious corruption, when pagan idolatry triumphed over the worship of Jehovah. It was also a time of persecution, when 'innocent blood' was shed (2 Kings xxi. 16), *i.e.*, probably the blood of the adherents of the true religion, whose protests and fidelity to Jehovah were obnoxious to the king. These were years when it seemed as if the nation might forget its old, distinctive faith, and the worship of Jehovah might perish from the land. Would not those who clung to the faith and ideals of the eighth-century prophets realize the peril which faced the true religion? When the messages of the prophets had been unheeded in their own time, the prophets and their disciples had committed them to writing. So in the dark days of Manasseh the leaders among the faithful may well have sought to put their ideal for the nation's life and religion into a written form. Such a book would be a thing of idealism in their own generation, a vision and a dream. But it would be a summary of Jehovah's requirements of His people which, when a better day came, would recall the nation to its true allegiance. The book was not just a vague expression of prophetic wistfulness. It embodied the prophetic ideals in a scheme of national organization and worship. It might be called a prophetico-priestly manifesto. Such being its nature, some sympathisers among the Temple priesthood may have put a copy in a safe place among the Temple archives, whence in the reign of Josiah it was at length brought to light to find its opportunity and do its work.

But whether compiled in the reign of Hezekiah, or Manasseh, or Josiah, the book was not an entirely original document in the sense of setting forth quite new ideals and laws. The person or persons who drew it up availed themselves of already-existing sources, legal and historical. These sources we can still find among the writings which make up the books preceding Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch. Running through these books and furnishing the earliest and most important material in them can be traced a literary work of prophetic outlook and character which contains both history and legislation. To it belong chapters xx.-xxiii. of Exodus, in which we have a body of laws generally called the 'Book of the Covenant.' Exodus xx. 1-17 contains the Decalogue, which reappears in Deuteronomy v.; while the rest of Deuteronomy v.-xi. is a kind of expansion and amplification of the idea of the First Commandment. The legal chapters xii.-xxvi. of Deuteronomy contain practically all the laws of Exodus xx.-xxiii. except a section dealing with compensation for injuries. Sometimes the laws are simply repeated word for word. Sometimes they are amplified. Sometimes they are developed to suit a more advanced stage of social organization. To suit this latter also, many new laws are added. In short, Deuteronomy xii.-xxvi. is a kind of enlarged and revised edition of the older Book of the Covenant, an element of exhortation being added to the legal enactments.

From the narrative sections of the Pentateuch which belong to the same 'prophetic' literary source as the Book of the Covenant are derived the historical portions of Deuteronomy, such as i. 6-iii. 29 and ix. 8-x. 11. Sometimes the narrative of Exodus and Numbers is followed closely and repeated word for word. Sometimes its tenor is reproduced more freely and with a didactic aim, the writer desiring to make clear the lessons to be learned from the events of the history. The 'Song' of ch. xxxii. also deals with the lessons of Israel's history; but whether it formed a part of Deuteronomy as found in Josiah's time is impossible to determine. The 'Blessing' of ch. xxxiii. bears many marks of antiquity, and is probably the oldest part of the book from a literary point of view.

But, apart from such sources as existed in written form, the compiler of the book was deeply influenced by the prophetic teaching of the latter part of the eighth century. If the spirit of Moses still breathes in the Decalogue and in the oldest laws which the writer of Deuteronomy embodied in his work, the spirit

of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah is likewise felt, infused through all the material which the author incorporated in his book, and giving the book its distinctive character as a prophetic presentation of Israel's law in view of the needs and problems of seventh-century Judah. 'Deuteronomy may be described as the *prophetic reformulation, and adaptation to new needs, of an older legislation.* It is probable that there was a tradition, if not a written record, of a final legislative address delivered by Moses in the Steppes of Moab: the plan followed by the author would rest upon a more obvious motive, if he thus worked upon a traditional basis. But, be that as it may, the bulk of the laws contained in Deuteronomy is undoubtedly far more ancient than the time of the author himself; and in dealing with them as he has done, in combining them into a manual adapted for popular use, and bringing them into close relation with moral and religious principle, he cannot, in the light of the considerations that have been adduced [the ideas and precedents of ancient literary composition], be held guilty of dishonesty or literary fraud. There is nothing in Deuteronomy implying an interested or dishonest motive on the part of the (post-Mosaic) author: and this being so, its moral and spiritual greatness remains unimpaired; its inspired authority is in no respect less than that of any other part of the Old Testament Scriptures which happens to be anonymous.'[1]

## IV.

## The Message of Deuteronomy.

The message of Deuteronomy may most suitably be presented under two aspects—God's character and man's duty. Throughout the book these are held in a close unity. The exhibition of God's character as a persuasive motive to man's obedience is the outstanding distinction of the work. The history which the book contains is not narrated as the mere record of the course of events in connection with which the legislation was promulgated. Rather it is set down as a manifestation of God's will and God's purposes, exhibiting the Great Divine heart out of which the claims upon the nation's obedience issue. Neither is the legislation set forth as a bald collection of statutory requirements. It is announced and expounded as the means whereby men can make an adequate response to the goodness and guidance shown them by their God. History and legislation are supplemented by passages of moving exhortation, such as the deeply impressive chapter xxviii., than which there is no more powerful piece of oratorical writing in the Old Testament. Moreover, apart from such passages, the history and the legislation are interpenetrated by the conception that obedience to the laws is the only worthy and honourable attitude of men who hear in the laws, and see in the history, a God at once righteous and gracious.

As regards God's nature and will, the teaching of Deuteronomy is in harmony with that of the great prophets. Jehovah is the one, sole God. He is a spiritual Being. He is a holy God, whose will is a will of righteousness. He has, of His grace, entered into relations of special intimacy with Israel, whom He has chosen to be His peculiar people. The reason for this choice is not any merit in Israel but simply an outflowing of Jehovah's love and desire to bless (vii. 7-8, ix. 4-6). Deuteronomy alone in the Pentateuch states and stresses the fact of God's love, and is here specially akin to the prophet Hosea. Deuteronomy speaks of Jehovah's love to the Patriarchs—the nation in the past (iv. 37, x. 15); His love to the nation in the present (vii. 8, xxiii. 5); and His love awaiting the nation in the future (vii. 13). The promises which God has made in His goodness are promises by which He will stand. But His love is not a mere, unethical benevolence. It is essentially moral. It cannot be complacent to wickedness. It is not to be presumed upon to condone lightly and overlook easily. It works no less in correction and in discipline than in easily-appreciated blessings. It is the love of a father who realizes a father's full responsibilities (viii. 5).

In response to this revelation of God's character man is asked to realize and execute his duties. No worship is to be paid to 'other gods'; nor is the One God to be worshipped

[1] Driver, *Deuteronomy*, p. lxi.f.

through idolatrous emblems or heathen ritual. To help them in remembering Jehovah's undivided claims and in rendering pure worship, the people are to gather for religious ceremonial at a single, central sanctuary. Apart from formal worship, they are to cherish towards God a reverent awe: they are to 'fear' Him. But they are also to love Him (vi. 5, x. 12, xi. 1, etc.). And out of this combined fear and love the whole round of life's pieties and obediences should spring.

Deuteronomy is emphatic that man's duties have a manward direction as well as a Godward. In the whole round of social and domestic life man finds a sphere for loyal carrying out of the will of God. Just dealing in all the relationships of life and a true concern for the welfare of one's neighbour should mark the people of God. The slave and the stranger, the ox and the ass have a claim upon the Israelite, making their various appeals to his sense of justice and his feelings of compassion. St. Paul (1 Co. ix. 9, 1 Ti. v. 18) extracts a wide significance from the law that the ox be left unmuzzled when it treads out the corn (xxv. 4). He applies it to the life of man, and uses it to enforce the general principle that the labourer is worthy of his hire. His allegorical interpretation is quite in keeping with the humanitarian spirit which pervades Deuteronomy. But we are glad to accept the precept in the literal, if limited, application which it has in its original setting, assuring us that God does 'take care for oxen.' Thus received, the law embodies the gracious insistence, characteristic of Deuteronomy, that God's care is all-embracing and that man's humane concern should be similarly sensitive and comprehensive.

## V.

## Outline of Contents.

It will be useful to set out in brief, tabular form the contents of Deuteronomy, so that the scheme of the book as we now have it, and the relations of its parts, may be more readily grasped.

I. *Chs. i.—iv. 40, Moses' First Discourse.*
- i. 1—5: Where and when the discourses were delivered.
- i. 6—iii. 29: Historical retrospect.
- iv. 1—40: Exhortations to hearken, remember, and obey.
- (iv. 41—43; Appointment of three cities of refuge east of Jordan).

II. *Chs. iv. 44—xxviii., Moses' Second Discourse.*
- iv. 44—49: Introduction.
- v.—xi.: God's *general* requirements of the nation in accordance with His character and purposes.
- xii.—xxviii.: Code of *detailed* laws, with concluding instructions and exhortation, thus:—
  - xii.—xvi. 17: Sacred observances and social duties.
  - xvi. 18—xviii. 22: National functionaries—judges, king, priests and prophets.
  - xix.—xxvii.: Criminal law and miscellaneous.
  - xxviii.: Exhortation and warning.

III. *Chs. xxix.—xxx., Moses' Third Discourse.*
- xxix.: Appeal to enter and keep the covenant with God.
- xxx.: Promises and issues.

IV. *Chs. xxxi.—xxx., Last Acts and Words of Moses.*
- xxxi.: Final instructions.
- xxxii.: Song of Moses.
- xxxiii.: Blessing of Moses.
- xxxiv.: Death of Moses.

W. M. Mathieson.

## The Mountain and the Plain.

Deut. i. 6.—'Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain.'

When the Israelites had escaped from the bondage of Egypt, they found themselves at Sinai in a place of comfort, security and high privilege. They were delivered from bondage. No taskmaster's whip now compelled their unwilling strength to toil. They were safe from their enemies. The chariots and horsemen of Pharaoh were far away at the bottom of the Red Sea, and no hostile tribes gave them battle. They had enough to eat and drink. Their

leader, Moses, from the high vantage-ground saw spiritual realities face to face. He talked with the Lord God as a friend talks with his friend. And he caused them to hear the echoes of that friendly voice which spoke to them out of the cloud. It was truly a place of high privilege. But just there, in that hour of their comfort and security, came the Divine voice saying, 'Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain; turn you . . . and go.'

It is the way of life. It is so with us all. It must be so. We have here no continuing city, no pleasant environment that may be depended upon to last for ever. We have no certain form of experience that may be relied upon to endure to-morrow and the day after and the third day. We are pilgrims and sojourners, as our fathers were. The Divine voice for ever says, 'Ye have been long enough in this mountain; turn you . . . and go.'

1. The *mountain* is the place of *vision*, the *plain* is the place of *achievement*. When Moses stood on the top of the mount he saw spiritual reality face to face. He saw that the glory of God was not His almightiness, it was not His omniscience, it was His righteousness. God was beyond all else a God of character, a covenant-keeping God, a God who fulfilled His agreements with those who undertook to obey His will. He was a God of righteousness, and that was His glory.

That was the vision Moses saw. And when he came down the mountain-side his face shone, and he caused the Israelites to see something, to feel something, of the splendour of righteousness. It was the place of great privilege. Yet just then, as they were seeing the glory, there came the command, 'Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain, turn you . . . and go.'

It is one thing to be a hearer of the Word, but quite a different thing to be a doer. It is a great thing to see a vision, it is a higher and finer thing to carry the vision into deed. It is to that that the Divine voice summons men in their hours of high privilege. If those great hours at Sinai were to mean anything, then the Israelites must come down from the mountain, and plant fields and build homes and work out those activities and institutions that had to do with ordinary life. If Israel was to become a great nation, and if in its expanding life all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, then Israel must come down and in ordinary concerns work out those great principles which she had seen and heard on Mount Sinai.

¶ The double inscription above the Samuel Dexter memorial gate at Harvard contains these eloquent messages in a few words:—

Over the entrance, on the outside, one reads:
'Enter to grow in wisdom.'
Upon leaving the grounds one looks up and reads on the inside this sentence:
'Depart to serve better thy country and thy kind.'

2. In the second place the *mountain* was the place of *security*, the *plain* was the place of *struggle*. When these Israelites escaped from Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen at the Red Sea they enjoyed freedom from danger for a period. In that moment of peace the voice sounded, 'Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain: turn you . . . and go.'

You see the change in the type of leader who came to the front after Moses died. Moses was a man of peace. You never find a sword in his hand. He saw the Divine glory in the Bush that burned with fire. He saw the finger of God in the writing of the laws and principles that underlie social well-being to this hour. But Joshua was a man of another mould. He was a fighter. To him the vision of the Divine came in the figure of an armed man standing outside the walls of Jericho. Joshua was called to another type of leadership. The time for peace and meditation and vision had gone, the time for action had come.

¶ If this life be not a real fight, in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, it is no better than a game of private theatricals from which one may withdraw at will. But it *feels* like a real fight,—as if there were something really wild in the universe which we, with all our idealities and faithfulnesses, are needed to redeem; and first of all to redeem our own hearts from atheisms and fears. For such a half-wild, half-saved

universe our nature is adapted. The deepest thing in our nature is this dumb region of the heart in which we dwell alone with our willingnesses and our unwillingnesses, our faiths and our fears.[1]

3. Once more, the *mountain* was the place of *dramatic crisis,* the *plain* was the place for the *humdrum process.* There was never in the history of the Israelites another time like those hours on Sinai. It was a time of spiritual crisis. Read it as prose or read it as poetry, it certainly represented something unique in the spiritual development of that race, and in the spiritual experience of their own competent leader. Then came the call to leave all that for ever and to enter upon the age-long patient process of ushering in the Kingdom of God by putting into practice those things they had seen and heard and felt in their time of spiritual uplift.

It may be there are some who remember with great joy some splendid hour in their own spiritual history. It may have been the night of their conversion, when the burden of sin was rolled away. To such there comes a voice, You have dwelt long enough in the memory of the joy of that high hour and that remarkable spiritual crisis: turn you and go, and in your home and along the dusty street and in the humdrum tasks of your employment seek to convert these experiences into actual practice.

As one experience gives place to another, as you move out of the sunshine of joy into the shadow of sorrow, as you go out from security into the place of struggle, as you march from some time of splendid uplift on to the long, wearisome, humdrum task, you will hear the same voice, and you will know that it is all ordered by Him who controls the movement of the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, and you will rejoice that your life is not a thing static like a stone wall; it is a thing of movement and progress, and with your eyes on the pillar of cloud and fire you will go on undismayed.

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

. . .

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

. . .

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.[1]

[1] William James.

## The Word of Command.

Deut. i. 7.—'Turn you, and take your journey, and go.'

THE sojourn of Israel, the ancient people of God, at Horeb had been important and interesting. There they had received from God the words of the law, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the ritual of worship. They had had revelations there of the glory of God, and revelations of their own hearts; they had found in themselves rebellion and sin, even in that brief time. They had also had revelations of the tenderness and compassion of their God.

At last the organization is complete; they are ready to move forward and to take possession of the land which God has given them, and the word comes to them suddenly, with a pertinence that reminds them that in actual practice they are a theocracy under the direct government of God. Every man of them holds to the theory of the Divine government; but now a sudden order takes hold of the creed which they had professed, and turns it into a fact to be put into practice. To these people sojourning at the mount, in the place of revelation, in the place of wonderful blessing, the word comes swift and sudden and startling: 'Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain, turn you, . . . and go.'

1. These words reveal the fact of the Divine government. How easy it would have been for Israel to settle down there and say, 'We believe in God and in the Divine government.' Had there been no voice speaking to them in

[1] Whittier.

actual leading, no word coming to disturb them, they might have come to hold the Divine government merely as a theory. Then it would have passed out of their lives, and would have failed to be what it was intended to be to them.

But what a disturbing business! What a serious thing to be under the authority of Someone who can upset everything in our lives without consulting us, and by a word can mark for us the moment of departure! That is the government of God. We may talk and sing about the Kingdom, and pray about the Kingdom, but until we face that fact we know nothing of what it is to be living in the Kingdom of God and under the government of the Most High.

Human arrangements are constantly disturbed in the Kingdom of God, and what is more remarkable still, Divine plans seem to be changed, and orders that we have most definitely received from on high are countermanded, and the whole programme of life again and again is changed for the men and women who are desirous of obeying only God's will. To-day a man is in a sphere where God has put him, and on every hand God is graciously setting His seal upon the work that He has given him to do. But the Divine voice comes: 'Ye have tarried here long enough.' That work must be dropped. All its hallowed associations must be left behind, and all the tender ties that have become entwined around the heart on account of that work must be snapped. The Divine voice is heard—the only voice to which a man in the Kingdom of God should pay any attention—and the sphere of work entered into because the Divine finger pointed that way must be left the moment that voice bids the man move forward.

Yes, the Divine government is a disturbing element. But our duty is so to live that we shall be ready to be disturbed at any moment when God pleases.

Though mortal, am I needful, Lord, to Thee,
That Thou dost lead me from my quiet years
Of blossoming love, and my sweet peace-tilled fields
To Thy dark Hill, upon Thy solemn Tree
To nail my hands and feet; within my side
To thrust Thy bitter spear? O lonely Christ,
If my deep wounds can ease the pain of Thine,
Pierce me once more! Yea, Master, I will bide

Steadfast to guard Thy storm-lashed Calvary.
Though round me all the tempting worlds should lean
To succour, yet my passionate heart shall bleed
Till Thou Thyself return and heal, and set me free.[1]

2. Now turn to the second point, because that explains the first. The Divine government is not only a disturbing element in human life, it is a progressive element. God disturbs a man. Why? To move him on to something better—never that there may be retrogression, never merely for the sake of disturbance. If God asks me to strike my tent to-day and move out yonder, it is because yonder there is a higher possibility, a more glorious outlook, a more perfect sphere. I may not see the advantage at first, but God's eye is always on the consummation, and He moves His people step by step, at the right moment, in the right way, and ever, ever onward, towards that glorious consummation.

Progress is not necessarily pleasant. Notice how, years after, Moses speaks of the departure from Horeb. In the nineteenth verse of the first chapter of Deuteronomy, he says: 'And we journeyed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw, by the way to the hill-country of the Amorites, as Jehovah our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea.' That was the movement. But how? Through that great and terrible wilderness. It was not a pleasant experience, but it was progress; it was moving onward. It was a further march into the purposes of God.

When we look back on all the paths we tried,
The turns and windings all,
Shall we not own, where'er the paths divide,
It was the Hand we sought to thrust aside
That let the blessing fall?[2]

[1] G. O. Warren, *The Sword*, 120.
[2] Frederick Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 12.

3. Now take the third point. Not only is the Divine government disturbing and progressive, but it is methodical. Strike your tents, get away from the mountain. Where to? The land! That is the ultimate issue—possession of the land. Not only is there an ultimate issue in the mind of God when He disturbs His people, but there is clearly marked direction. We see this in the seventh verse of this chapter: 'Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the hill-country of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the Arabah, in the hill country, and in the lowland, and in the South, and by the seashore, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.' There is direction towards possession.

But the most exquisite statement of all that marks the Divine arrangement for the journey is in the thirty-second and the thirty-third verses: 'Jehovah your God, who went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in the cloud by day.' There is nothing haphazard or accidental in such a life. God's people move in a plainly marked pathway, step by step. The government of God not only disturbs them, and disturbs them for progress, but every inch of the way He has arranged for them.

¶ God is a great executive, *the* great executive of the universe. He planned the vast scheme of worlds making up the universe, and every detail. The whole universe in its immensity, and the intricacy of its movements, is kept in motion by Him. And every detail, down to the smallest, the falling of one of the smallest birds, is ever under His thoughtful eye and touch. And He is our God. He has each of us on His heart.[1]

## "The World Went Very Well Then."

Deut. i. 12.—'How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?'

A MODERN novelist entitles one of his stories, *'The World Went very Well Then.'* We are apt to idealize the days that are past. It is easy to speak of the good old times. But life has always had its tragic aspects. The cross is a symbol which every age can appreciate by dolorous experience. Even Israel in the wilderness had its cumbrance, and its burden, and its strife. Life has always been rigorous, and whatever age we might have lived in would have witnessed our tribulation and discipline.

1. Life has always had its *cumbrance.* What is 'cumbrance'? It is that which cumbers or encumbers; that which renders action difficult and toilsome; hindrance; embarrassment. And is this ancient only? Or is it modern only? Our life is full of 'cumbrance.' Which of us has an unimpeded path? Who travels in uninterrupted progress? Is effort always easy? Are any of us unaccustomed to hindrances? 'Your cumbrance' is an expression which is peculiarly pertinent to our modern life. The old Book of Deuteronomy describes our daily experience. No novel could so well delineate life as we know it. The youngest and brightest of us has his 'cumbrance.' Middle-life is sadly disquieted by its 'cumbrance.' Even old-age knows all too well the pathos of 'cumbrance.'

Our scholars tell us that an equivalent for the Hebrew word here rendered 'cumbrance' is 'pressure.' Pressure is the supreme feature of life to-day. Nearly every one groans under it. We have so little quiet. Action overwhelms reflection, and almost annihilates personality. You can all expound for yourselves the phrase which Moses uttered to Israel—'Your cumbrance.'

¶ The bondage of circumstances, of the world, but chiefly of self, has at times seemed to me quite intolerable; the more because it takes away all one's energy to throw it off, and then the difficulty of escaping to God! of *asking* to have the weight taken away! Oh there is infinite comfort in the thought that He hears all our cries for rescue, and is Himself the Author and Finisher of it.[1]

¶ In a letter written to Meredith, towards the end of his life, Robert Louis Stevenson said: 'For fourteen years I have not had a real day's health. . . . I have written in bed, and written out of it, written in hemorrhages,

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 214.

[1] *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, i. 520.

written in sickness, written torn by coughing, written when my head swam for weakness; and for so long, it seems to me, I have won my wager and recovered my glove. . . . The battle goes on—ill or well, is a trifle; so as it goes. I was made for a contest, and the Powers have so willed that my battlefield should be this dingy, inglorious one of the bed and the physic bottle.'

2. Life has always had its *burden*. 'Your burden,' said Moses. He meant the burden the people were to him. But all the people had a burden. And so have all people to-day. Each of us deems his burden the heaviest and most grievous of all burdens. But, if you knew the gravity of your neighbour's burden, it would reconcile you to your own burden. God deals out all burdens, and He lays upon each of us the very burden which is best adapted to us. We come to realize this as we are taught of the Holy Spirit. We come to see also that our burden is the very one which will, if faithfully borne, discipline us best for eternal life.

Job declared that he was a burden to himself. Many a man is. We have so perverted our personality that we have to say, 'I am a burden to myself.' But Christ can set us free. He can make a burdened individuality to become a winged individuality, soaring aloft into the heavenly places.

¶ Doubtless your cross was chosen for you by our Lord and Master just for its weight. To me there is always a wonderful beauty and consolation in the fact, so simply told in the narrative of the Passion, that His cross proved too heavy for Him. He has never since that hour suffered any one of His own to bear a cross unaided, nor yet too heavy.[1]

Burden-bearers are we all,
Great and small.
Burden-sharers be ye all,
Great and small!
Where another shares the load,
Two draw nearer God.
Yet there are burdens we can share
with none,
Save God;
And paths remote where we must walk
alone,
With God;
For lonely burden and for path apart—
Thank God!
If these but serve to bring the burdened
heart
To God.[1]

[1] *Life of Archbishop Magee*, i. 268.

3. And life has always had its *strife*. Jeremiah complained that he had been born 'a man of strife.' That is the predestination of some men. And they have often mourned it. Principal Rainy was 'a man of strife' in Ecclesiastical Courts, and in reading his record it is easy to discern that much of the strife was foreign to his constitutional tastes and preferences. We must beware lest 'our strife' becomes congenial to us. Paul admonished Timothy of things which 'do gender strifes.'

As for your spiritual strife, it can end only with life. It is a hard but a good fight. Courage, brother! Pray without ceasing, and watch thereunto. Victory shall presently end your strife.

Forth from the casemate, on the plain
Where honour has the world to gain,
Pour forth, and bravely do your part,
O knights of the unshielded heart!
Forth and for ever forward—out
From prudent turret and redoubt,
And in the mellay charge amain,
To fall but yet to rise again!
Captive? ah, still, to honour bright,
A captive soldier of the right!
Or free and fighting, good with ill?
Unconquered but unconquering still![2]

## The Hebrew Judge.

Deut. i. 16.—'I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother.'

The administration of justice among the ancient Hebrews is a subject of profound historic interest. The fact is obvious, that the wisest laws are but of little avail if they are imperfectly executed. Hence legislators do not

[1] John Oxenham, *Bees in Amber*, 23.

[2] R. L. Stevenson.

confine themselves to the framing of sensible enactments, but also endeavour to provide for their being practically acted upon and duly obeyed. In the earliest ages of the Hebrew people the administration of justice was vested in the heads of tribes or the patriarchs of a family. In the Book of Job the patriarchal magnate is represented as going forth to the gate of the city amid the respectful silence of the elders, princes, and nobles. When the Israelites emerged from Egyptian slavery into national existence, the want of judicial machinery began to make itself felt. Moses at first took the whole burden of judging the people upon himself; but it soon became evident that his strength would succumb beneath the weight of this responsible charge, that the administration of justice would be slow and tedious, and that this would impair the interests of the people. Jethro, therefore, proposed the division of the nation into sections, and the appointment of a magistrate or judge over each of those divisions. And there is a tradition, preserved by William of Malmesbury, to the effect that Alfred the Great, after the conclusion of the Danish wars, was guided by the Biblical arrangement to re-introduce the divisions into tithings and hundreds.

1. Our text contains the exhortation which Moses addressed to these newly-appointed judges—that they were not to respect persons, but to hear the small as well as the great, and that they were to do their duty fearlessly. These words contain the pith and quintessence of the duties of a judge. They form the basis of every system of jurisprudence worthy of the name; they should be inscribed in golden letters on every Court of Law. They ordain that not birth or rank, but worth and knowledge, are to be the qualifications of a judge. Whilst in Egypt none but members of the privileged caste of priests could be invested with the interpretation and application of the laws, whilst in Rome the patricians for a considerable time retained with an iron grasp this prerogative for their order, in Israel the exercise of judicial functions was the birthright of every citizen. The point insisted upon was that the judges should be men of unimpeachable integrity. In pronouncing judgment they were not to follow the multitude, blind and lacking discrimination, to the perversion of justice, nor dared they favour the poor from a misplaced sense of pity. Seven qualities were regarded as the indispensable requisites of a judge: fear of God, wisdom, modesty, hatred of gain, love of truth, the love of his fellow-creatures, and a name free from stain. The vice most sternly denounced was venality, corruption. And we are told in the Talmud that judges of later days guarded themselves against even the appearance of accepting bribes with a scrupulousness which many may deem excessive.

¶ We read that Rabbi Samuel was passing over a plank laid across a stream when a stranger drew nigh and offered his hand to conduct him with safety over the frail bridge. The Rabbi, on inquiring who this person was, learned that he was a suitor who desired him to adjudicate upon his cause. On hearing this he said: 'Friend, thou hast disqualified me by thy eager courtesy. I am no longer able to judge thy cause with impartiality.'

2. Our text is also worthy of note for its inclusion of the principle which is justly regarded as a main bulwark of justice—the privilege of appeal. 'And the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.' All complex legal questions were to be referred to the leader of the people. Accordingly, we read in the Pentateuch that the questions of the punishment of the blasphemer and of the Sabbath-breaker and the case of the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad were brought before Moses. At a later period the tribunal of the seventy elders was appointed, whose primary function it was to solve complex points of law that were beyond the power of the tribal or local courts. It would appear that from this tribunal sprang the Sanhedrin, which constituted the Supreme Court of Judicature in the nation.

3. We do not know with certainty whether in the more ancient times advocates to defend the accused were allowed. A professional class of advocates certainly did not exist. But

Scripture texts abound in which the pleading of the cause of those who are unable to defend themselves, the poor and the needy, is described as one of the noblest acts of charity, and the highest exercise of mercy. Thus Job says: 'Oh that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour.'

4. But the most noteworthy point in this connection is the high veneration manifested in the Bible for the office of judge. He is regarded as a sacred person; seeking a decision at law is called inquiring of God, for wise laws and righteous judgments are an inspiration from Him who combines within Himself the highest truth and the most perfect holiness: 'For the judgment is God's.'

¶ On the 24th of March, 1875, Sir George Jessel, a Jew and Master of the Rolls, attended the aniversary festival of the Jews' Hospital. I vividly remember with what fervour he spoke the following words when responding to the toast of Her Majesty's Judges: 'There is nothing I look upon with more gratification than the fact that my humble efforts have not only been of service to myself and to the community to which I belong, but also to those to whom we are bound by the common ties of brotherhood and religion.' [1]

## Kadesh-Barnea.

Deut. i. 19.—'We came to Kadesh-barnea.'

KADESH-BARNEA was a great turning point in the history of the Israelites, and one at which they turned the wrong way. Kadesh-barnea is situated just at the southern border of the Promised Land. Only a range of hills separates it from Canaan, so that when the Children of Israel encamped there they could feel they were within striking distance of their inheritance. From this point they could send spies into the land of Canaan to find out the character of the country. These spies, or rather ten of them, brought back an unfavourable report. They said it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey, all that God had said it was; but it was so strongly held, and by such mighty men, that there was no hope of Israel's ever conquering it. This—a majority report—the people accepted, and positively refused to proceed further. A minority report, brought in by Joshua and Caleb, was turned down, and its authors almost stoned amidst riot and rebellion. Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the Tabernacle, and He condemned that whole generation to wander in the desert till death. The ten men who brought in the unfavourable report perished at once under the hand of God, and Moses was told that of all that generation only Joshua and Caleb should enter the kingdom.

It was now or never with that generation. They had reached a point in their journeyings when prompt, decisive action on their part would have meant the fulfilment of all their hopes and of all the promises of God. But with the fruit of their toils and tribulations just within their grasp, they refused to take it, so it was taken away from them altogether; and it was not until their children grew to manhood that the nation entered Palestine.

1. There is a Kadesh-barnea in *every enterprise*. In every enterprise there is a point when prompt action is essential to success. All that goes before leads up to that crisis; all that follows hinges on it. If the men in charge of an affair have the foresight to take advantage of the opportunity, more can be accomplished within an hour than otherwise could be accomplished in a year. But if the opportunity is lost and allowed to slip by unimproved, then complete success becomes impossible, and the movement will shrink away into utter failure. It was that Shakespeare meant when he said—

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Napoleon used to say that the fate of every battle was decided in a space of about five minutes. That was the crisis of the struggle. All the manœuvring and fighting that went before led up to that strategic moment: all

[1] H. Adler, *Anglo-Jewish Memories*, 20.

that followed was determined by it. If the general had the clearness of vision to see that moment, and to take advantage of it, all that remained was to complete the enemy's rout and gather in the fruits of victory. But if that moment was allowed to pass unimproved success was impossible and defeat sure. In one of his battles he saw the strategic moment at a time when the forces of the enemy were stretched over too wide a territory, leaving them thin and weak at the centre; concentrating all his forces for an attack on that weakened centre, he simply broke the army in two and completely routed them. At another time he saw the crisis at a point when his forces halted before a bridge over a deep ravine. The bridge was swept by Austrian cannon; to venture upon it seemed certain death. Seeing the enemy wavering, Napoleon snatched the standard from the standard-bearer and rushed with it to the middle of the bridge shouting, 'Forward, to save your general!' The men crowded after to victory. The effect under such circumstances was electric on friend and foe alike. Defeat at that stage of Napoleon's career would have been disastrous.

2. There is a Kadesh-barnea in every *career*. All that goes before leads up to that point in a young man's or a young woman's career; all that follows hinges on it. We hear a good deal in these days about a coming man; his Kadesh-barnea has not yet arrived. Whether his possibilities will ever become actualities or not depends on how he deals with his Kadesh-barnea when it does come. There are 'going men' as well as 'coming men,' but we do not hear so much about them. Their Kadesh-barnea has come and gone, and their opportunities have gone with it. They are no longer growing factors in the world's progress; they are no longer forces to be reckoned with in the plans of men; they have lost their opportunity. It is only a question of time and they will be elbowed out of the struggle altogether. No amount of effort at a subsequent period can compensate them for that opportunity they lost.

¶ It is curious to note how nearly every military officer who held a command or high position on the staff in Bengal when the Mutiny broke out disappeared from the scene within the first few weeks, and was never heard of officially again. Some were killed, some died of disease, but the great majority failed completely to fulfil the duties of the positions they held, and were consequently considered unfit for further employment. Two Generals of divisions were removed from their commands, seven Brigadiers were found wanting in the hour of need, and out of the seventy-three regiments of Regular Cavalry and Infantry which mutinied, only four Commanding officers were given other commands, younger officers being selected to raise and command the new regiments.[1]

3. There is a Kadesh-barnea in every man's *spiritual life*. Men reach a point where it seems as though it were but a step to Jesus. Everything is in their favour. They have been lifted out of themselves, and they may by the action of their own will cut their connection with the past, and start out on a new career with new possibilities and new paths. But how often, with the light of heaven shining in their face, they have chosen evil of their own free will, and walked in outer darkness. Kadesh-barnea and lost!

Bow down thy head, and enter, fearing much
The throned and dreadful presence of this hour:
There lives in it a quick and eager power
To try thee with a touch.
Its white, essential truth is even such,
None goeth forth as he did enter in,
But it will set the soul in each man's face—
The joy and wonder of his proven grace,
Or dark precipitation of his sin.
As Moses, yea, as Jesus from the mount,
One shall arise,
With dews, and living splendours in his eyes,
Out of the heavenly morning's very fount,
So that his kindled robe shall flash and glow:
And one shall be made white in other wise:
He shall go forth a leper white as snow.[2]

[1] Lord Roberts, *Forty-one Years in India*, 244.
[2] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 40.

4. In like manner there is a Kadesh-barnea in *the history of every Church,* when circumstances seem to combine to give that Church a greater future and greater power than ever. On how that Church deals with that opportunity her whole future depends. An evangelist of note says that in every mission he conducted the whole movement seemed to come to a point in some particular meeting. At that time he felt that the burden of the success of the whole rested on his shoulders, and he was straining every nerve and muscle to push the movement over the crest. If he succeeded, then it would go down to complete success with ever-increasing momentum; but if he failed at that moment it would slide back on him in spite of all he could do, and no amount of effort on his part, or on the part of others, could make the movement what it ought to be. Sometimes, he said, the Spirit of God came in power, so that the whole community would be moved to the depths; at other times the forces of evil raged unbroken around, and only individuals were won to God. The whole success, then, depended on how the movement went when they came to a crisis.

Sometimes a Church's Kadesh-barnea comes in the moral issue that is presented to her for solution; and, after all, a Church's position in the world depends on her attitude in these great ethical issues. If a Church does not prove herself a moral force ready to sacrifice everything for the cause of righteousness she cannot retain the respect of the world. But if, when the issue comes, utterly regardless of her own interest she goes forward to do what she believes to be the will of God, then she will find she will win the respect and support of men and have the power of God with her in the days to come.

¶ Great Britain led the world in the deliverance of humanity from the degradation of slavery; the United States and Canada are leading the world in the still greater deliverance of humanity from the degradation of alcohol. . . . It was the Churches of the land that wakened the conscience of the people. It was better that any community perish rather than that they should offend one of the little ones for whom Christ died.

What we need is that the conscience of the community should be wakened in the same manner. The Church of Christ alone can sound the trumpet that wakens from the slumber of torpor. But the Church seems more concerned about dealing out soothing syrup to its soporific members than about wakening the dead. The spectacle of bishops denouncing Prohibition in the name of Freedom; of representative Church Councils refusing to recommend the cause of No-Licence; of congregations being narcotised to the slaughter of the innocents that goes on ceaselessly all around them—the victims of Bacchus laid for ever on his altar—while the preacher proclaims peace, peace, where there is no peace, and expounds an evangel of sweetness and light while the people are perishing—all that may well make angels weep. But the Churches are awakening. The Founder of Christianity prayed, 'Lead us not into temptation,' and Christians cannot for ever acquiesce in the State tempting its own children to their destruction. Just as we look back and marvel how any Christian could ever defend slavery, so fifty years hence, when the liquor traffic will have become a memory, men will marvel how Christians could ever have defended the Liquor Trade and looked on, silent, while it swept the young and the strong to doom.[1]

## God the Giver.

Deut. ii. 5.—'I have given Mount Seir unto Esau.'

Deut. ii. 9.—'I have given Ar unto the children of Lot.'

HERE we are face to face with the Divine Giver. The world is not ruled by speculation or by chance, but by Sovereign Providence. Note the majestic tone of the distribution. There is no hint of consultation with others. The voice is supreme, imperative, final.

1. The one thing to be noticed is that the same Providence not only rules to-day in the history which is occurring round about us, but is so patent as to be almost visible to the naked eye. God is the Distributer of gifts.

To one man he gives the harp of poetry.

[1] N. Maclean, *Victory out of Ruin,* 64.

The man is a poet from his birth. No credit is due to him for the original genius.

To another man is given the plough of agriculture. He will accept his plough in the right spirit if he has sufficient spiritual insight to see that the plough itself is but another form of the harp. The ploughman has poetry of his own. He must not think that the harp of the poet is superior to the plough of the agriculturist. Harp and plough are alike the gift of God.

To another man is given the genius of statesmanship. He can take large views of things. He can see how an average line runs through great masses of relationships and counterparts and conflicting interests.

To another man is given the ability to develop home-life into an instrument at once beautiful and beneficent. The home-maker is a statesman on a small scale. He takes account of his house; he is thrifty, industrious, and unostentatiously self-sacrificing.

¶ God's gifts are often to be recognized in our own fitness. There is a good deal of truth in what Sydney Smith said: 'Be what nature intended you for, and you will succeed; be anything else, and you will be ten thousand times worse than nothing.' This, of course, presumes that you have some gift. A lady once requested Rowland Hill to examine her son as a candidate for the ministry, remarking, 'I am sure he has a talent, but it is laid up in a napkin.' Mr. Hill had a lengthened interview with the youth, and then said to his mother, 'Well, madam, I have shaken out the napkin, but I cannot find the talent.' Every lad who is to get on in the world must study his own aptitudes. How many young fellows prove total failures, simply because they mistook the line for which God designed them; whilst others with less talent have met with brilliant success, because they got into their appropriate groove! Young Ferguson's wooden clock gave a hint of the future astronomer; Humphrey Davy's chemical experiments in boyhood, Faraday's electric machine made with a big bottle, Michael Angelo's pencil sketchings at school—all these showed the bent of each young mind, recalling the answer of a certain splendid equestrian, when asked how he sat so gracefully on the saddle, 'Oh,' said he, 'I was born on horseback'! [1]

2. In this way we may go through the whole area of human differences and note how true it is that as certainly as God gave mount Seir unto Esau, and Ar unto the children of Lot, He is now giving gifts, opportunities, and blessings to those who put their trust in Him. Jesus Christ recognized this principle in His teaching. He came to reveal the Kingdom of God—not the possibility of God, but the personal sovereignty and majesty of God. Now suppose we thoroughly believed this doctrine, what results would follow?

(1) We should be content with our gifts. We should see that each man has some peculiar trust from God. Each man would say, in effect: 'I did not make myself. I have one talent, my neighbour has two, and his neighbour has five: so be it; it is the Lord's will. He who gave mount Seir unto Esau has given me my talent, to do with it what I can.'

(2) We should adopt a sure and just basis of judgment. Instead of censuring each other for want of ability, or envying each other because of mental superiority or social advantage, we should recognize the hand of God in all our life, and say, 'It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth good in His sight.'

(3) We should thus recognize God as the constructor of society. When we see things aright we shall know that society, as well as a star, is the direct creation of God. Society means unity, brotherhood, co-operation; society holds great trusts from heaven; society should be a sanctuary in which the Almighty dwells and reigns. Do not let us be theologians in regard to doctrine, and atheists in regard to society. We speak of tumults, revolutions, wars, and upheavals of every kind, as if society were the sport of chance. It is not so. All these powers and all these expressions of energy are under the control of God. A great poem is being written by the Divine hand, and will be set to music by a contented universe.

[1] J. T. Davidson, *A Good Start*, 65.

## The Wilderness.

Deut. ii. 7.—'He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness.'

The journeying of the children of Israel through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan has always been looked upon as typical of the life-history of the believer as he travels on through this world to the better country that awaits him beyond the Jordan of death. And truly, the resemblance is very marked and very wonderful. Think of it. The Israelites came out of Egypt, the land of bondage and of sin; they wandered for forty years in the wilderness, where dangers and difficulties abounded, yet were they miraculously, providentially preserved; and at last—all their trials overpast—they safely reached the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey. Exactly similar is the experience of the believer. He, too, comes out of the land of bondage, the land of sin. He, too, has his years of wilderness wandering through this world, years of dangers, of difficulties, too often of lapses into sin; but years also rich with proofs of the care and the loving-kindness of the Lord. And at last, by God's good pleasure, he, too, arrives safely at home; he, too, reaches the true, the heavenly, Canaan, the land where pain and sorrow cannot come.

1. Those who have travelled through deserts have much to tell us of their experiences. Naturally, these records vary greatly; yet there are three essentials in which they all agree: they all tell us that desert journeys are terrible, first, because of their monotony; secondly, because of the fact that in a wilderness it is often impossible to have any fixed and carefully marked route to follow; and thirdly, because of the strange, subtle, unnerving effect that this special form of travel has upon the mind. Let us look at these three experiences, and see how they are reproduced in life.

(1) First, the monotony of the desert. Who has not been impressed by the sameness of life? Who, on rising in the morning, has not felt with a shudder that the same trivial tasks await him—will await him, if the Lord spare him health, through a long stretch of years? The sameness, the monotony, the hard daily grind of our work, while it is meant to form and ennoble the character, is nevertheless apt to have a deadening effect upon the soul. Picture the experiences of the desert traveller. So far as he can see, on all sides of him stretches the sandy waste Unvaried, unlovely is the scene. Have we not here also a picture of many, shall we say of most, human lives? Monotonous, yes, and dreary—such must often be our journey through the great wilderness which we call human life.

¶ Plough-Monday was the name given by the village ploughmen to the first Monday after Twelfth Day, when work was resumed after the twelve days' Christmas holidays. On it, lights (called Plough-lights) were burnt, prayers were offered, and a blessing was asked on the newly started work. Every Monday is Plough-Monday for most of us, as we go back to our 'plough,' and take up our work again after the Sunday's rest.

Plough-Monday! How much it means to hundreds and thousands of us! The dead routine in repeated acts; the apparent *cul-de-sac* to which the day's work seems to lead; the endless vista of changeless lives which faces so many; the stone wall which so often rears itself up between the ploughing and the produce, and prevents us from seeing results—all make Plough-Monday a desperate reality, and a gloomy one indeed to those who have not yet learned the secret of movement in monotony, of progress in repetition. There is, of course, thank God, another side to it all—but there it is, and we sometimes long with a great longing to escape from all this 'land of everyday.' Everyone tires of his own work sometimes. We can all sympathize with the story of Mr. Wentworth's delightful 'Little boy who wanted to know too much' and to go everywhere, and see everything, but—

But all these things I cannot do,
Because my lessons must be said,
And I must walk and take my meals,
And in the evening go to bed;
But oh! I wish I knew the way
Out of this Land of Every Day.

And without the rustic Ploughman's simple faith, without the lights, without the prayers, what a dismal Monday, what a dreary land of every day it would often be, and, alas! often is.[1]

(2) Secondly, we have the fact that in a wilderness it is often impossible to have any exact and carefully marked out route to follow. All is flat; all is waste; all is sand. There are no landmarks of any kind, no finger-posts to direct the traveller. Is it not often so in life? Have there not been times, and times without number, in our history, when we would have given much simply to have been told which way to turn? We spoke just now of the monotony of life; but there are seasons when its monotony is suddenly, startlingly broken, when a swift decision that may colour all our after life has to be made, when choose, and that speedily, we must, and we know not what to do.

Oft, as he jogs along the Winding-Way,
Occasion comes for Every Man to say,—
'This Road?—or That?' and as he chooses then,
So shall his journey end in Night or Day.[2]

(3) Again, desert journeys are terrible because of the strange, subtle, unnerving effect that this special form of travel has upon the mind. Who shall analyse that curious, unreasoning thing called *fear?* How can we explain the sudden groundless anticipations of evil that at times take possession of us and sap our strength? Why are there seasons when our strength of mind seems gone, when the star of hope seems to have left our sky, when our soul is filled with foolish, groundless fears? It is true that our wilderness journey through the world is brightened by many a green oasis, many an Elim with cool wells of water, with threescore and ten palm trees; but there is also the other side; the weariness of the long sandy reaches; the groundless, faithless fears.

Be you still, be you still, trembling heart;
Remember the wisdom out of the old days.
He who trembles before the flame and the flood,
And the winds that blow through the starry ways
Let the starry winds and the flame and the flood
Cover over and hide, for he hath no part
With the proud, majestical multitude.[1]

2. But it is well to remember that in our journey through life we are refreshed and strengthened by mercies as special as are the troubles, and that the troubles are known to God, and the mercies prepared by Him in anticipation of our need.

(1) There are mercies for us every day. We are loaded with benefits. Our life is no one thing exclusively; it would be smaller and poorer if it were. A sigh! That is not our life. A song! That is not our life. But there is more in human life of the song than of the sigh, if we only know how to draw out the notes and make the harmony. And in every life there are special mercies. 'Israel came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm-trees, and encamped there by the waters.' God prepared the palm-trees and the wells deep and cool, long before Israel reached them; and when the people were plodding wearily over the burning sand, up the hot treeless valleys and beside the bitter waters of Marah, He had waiting for them the sweet fountains and the cool shades.

Thus God 'prevents' His children with the blessings of His goodness. We get to-day the fruit of some ancient thoughts and operations of God. Long before your birth He was thinking of the years that were coming, and preparing for them: sowing seed to spring up in due season in your life. God has been sowing,—and now you are going to school. God has been sowing,—and, school-days over, you are going into an office or you are going to college and putting your hand to the business of your manhood. God has been sowing,—and you are going to be married; young perhaps, and before you thought of it; or a little older, and after you had almost believed it possible you might go through life alone. God has been sowing,—and you are succeeding in your work; and, better still, doing something for others,

[1] E. E. Holmes, *The Days of the Week*, 22.
[2] J. Oxenham, *Bees in Amber*, 20.

[1] W. B. Yeats.

for their comfort here and their welfare eternally. 'He knoweth thy walking.' To remember this will enhance all joy and assuage all sorrow.

(2) And He knows how long our walking in the wilderness is to be; and where and when and how it will end. Here the analogy between Israel's pilgrimage and ours hardly holds. Israel marched always in a body: in a body they crossed the river and entered the promised land. We, no doubt, in a sense also march together through the wilderness, but each of us enters Canaan alone. Alone, and yet not alone. Stand aside that we may see Him who commands the river in all its extent, its depths and shallows alike, and who has said that He will Himself go with each one in crossing it. He 'liveth and was dead,' He knows the waters at their deepest and darkest, and He is 'alive for evermore,' and has 'the keys of Hades and of Death.'

'He knoweth.' Perhaps no one else does. For we dwell apart, and the very companion who travels by our side, and keeps step with us for many a mile, may never suspect the hidden troubles that we carry locked up in our breast, the heart-burdens that we never speak of to others. Our lives never overlap. We each live in a little world of our own, detached from all our fellows, so that others have but a very slender acquaintance of our real life.

Not even the tenderest heart, and next our own,
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh.

We each have a wine-press which we must tread alone, and a Pisgah to which we must climb unattended. But '*He* knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness.' He has His eye on each poor pilgrim, and takes loving notice of him as he plods along in his solitary way. 'He knoweth thy walking'—how slow it is, how staggering at times, how wearisome. When the desert sands are proving too hot for thee, He knows it; and when thy foot begins to blister, He knows it.

'He knoweth thy walking'—how many miles thou hast left behind thee, and how many yet remain to be trodden. How long am I to walk in the wilderness, and when will my walking be over? *He knoweth.* Will the way I have yet to travel be rough or smooth? *He knoweth.* Will I have many companions along with me, or must I go alone? *He knoweth.* Which of us will come first to the sepulchre? Will John outrun Peter, or will Peter arrive before John? *He knoweth.* Will the journey end pleasantly? Shall I have a joyful finish? *He knoweth.* And if *He* knows, I do not need to know. Let me, then, walk on, in the happy consciousness that 'He knoweth my walking.' To remember this, as we said already, will enhance all joy and assuage all sorrow.

## God's Beginnings.

Deut. iii. 24.—'O Lord God, thou hast begun.'

At the close of his long life—with the wonderful experience of what God had done lying behind him—what is the thought that rises to Moses' lips? It is that all this has only been enough to awaken hope—'O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand.' The mysterious name of God, which our Bible translates 'I am,' has been rendered by some scholars, 'I will be; I will do what I will do. It is My very nature to be a God of unimaginable promise, doing for those who look to Me far more than they can ask or think.' That rendering is as legitimate as the more metaphorical one. At any rate, this is the conception of the Divine nature which experience has enforced upon Moses. At the end of his long life he feels that God has only begun to show His greatness. If he is sure of anything, it is that God can do more and will do more than He has done yet. His very name is a name of promise. Moses has seen only one corner of the veil raised, which assures the good things God has in store for those that love Him.

1. Now that is a worthy spirit with which to come to the close of one's life. Death is a decisive end for us—the close of all our work on this scene. But if we have been in the company of God and have learned to know Him, we shall not measure His work by anything we have seen. Though our strength is

spent, He has no more than indicated His purpose and excited His people's interest and hopes. When Paul was ready to die he wrote to Timothy, 'I have finished my course.' But if he had been able to see what we see now, would he not have exclaimed, as Moses did, 'O Lord, thou hast begun'? There is a famous passage in Latin poetry in which the founder of the Roman race is taken to the end of the world and shown the fortunes of posterity. The grand figures of later history pass in magnificent procession before his eyes. But what Moses felt was far better than any such vision. He had faith that the work which had been so much to him was in God's hands, and that though his part in it was all but over, God's was only beginning.

2. It is easier to apply this consideration to New Testament times. When the last of the Apostles died, what had God done in the world? He had kindled His little sparks of light here and there in the darkness of heathendom. But the whole framework and the whole spirit of society were pagan. A society like that in which we live, in which there is an instinctive recognition of Christ as final moral authority, in which children are baptized in His name—such a society was beyond the Apostles' vision and perhaps beyond their conception. The Lord had more to do for the world than they had seen.

3. It is the same now. Generation after generation passes, men grow old and grey and die in the work of the Lord, yet that work is ever beginning. We see the authority of Christ extending even in Christendom. We see the application of His will becoming more constant and thorough. We see the banner of the cross displayed in the populous cities of China and the lovely islands of the sea, in the villages of India—North, South, East, and West, further than the Roman eagles ever flew; and all with their hearts pledged to this work know that it is only beginning. They grow old, not to be pessimists, not to lose hope in the world because their own eyes are dim or their natural force abated, but with their hearts young within them; eager and interested in what God is doing; sure that the best is yet to be.

¶ Christianity is the religion of the dominant nations of the earth. Nor is it rash to prophesy that in due time it will be the only religion in the world. This is not equivalent to saying that all non-Christian countries will become tributaries to Christian nations, but only that non-Christian countries will in the course of time become Christian. As Rome could not resist either the logic or the noble lives of preachers and believers, so it will be in India, and even in China. That day may be centuries hence, and the forms of church organisation and creedal statement may differ considerably from those which now prevail; but the day will surely come; and the religion will be essentially Christian, only purer and nobler and more loyal to Christ, we may hope and believe, than that which is now prevalent in Christendom. By the intellectual, moral, commercial, and political blessings—in a word, by the civilisation which God has given and still is giving to those nations which have adopted Christianity—He has indicated His approval; it is evident that He intends that these Christian nations shall have the predominant and moulding influence in the world at this stage of its development. The real reason why Christian nations are predominant is because they, more than others, have discovered and loved and lived the truth, the eternal principles on which God has created this world. And if we ask how they have come by this truth, there is only one answer, and it is exceedingly simple. Jesus Christ has given it to them, not explicitly, but implicitly; not by direct, specific detailed teachings, but by planting the seed; by starting the leaven; by implanting a fervid love of truth and purity and righteousness; by inspiring love of God as Father, of man as brother; by the giving of a new life, a new character, a new hope, and a new ambition; and, not least, by inspiring those who believe in Him with loyalty to Him and to truth. The seed Christ planted has sprouted, the leaven has spread slowly, Christian civilisation has developed. It is still far from perfect. Nevertheless it is here, doing its work, bestowing its blessings; those nations

who accept it heartily, and adopt its inmost principles, are ever to prosper, materially, mentally, morally, and spiritually.[1]

## The Past Sin.

Deut. iii. 25.—'Let me go over, I pray thee, and see the good land.'

We can hardly imagine how deep was the interest of Moses in Canaan. It was the land of the fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was the land God had chosen as the inheritance of Israel. It was the goal of forty years' wanderings. It was at length, for the second time and after a faithless generation had perished in the wilderness, within their sight. Could not Moses enter it, and taste that rest which remains for the people of God? 'But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.' It was not God's will that Moses should live to see the conquest of Canaan.

What was the sin of Moses? At first sight it seems very strange. Moses has this testimony given him in the Bible—that he was meek above all men. Yet he was not always meek. He was hot and hasty in his youth when he slew an Egyptian, and the sin of his youth flared up for one fatal moment as he struck the rock. He was exasperated by the discontent of the people and forgot what was due to the holiness of God. At last his sin found him out, and excluded him from the Holy Land. How strange that the meekest of men should fall by angry passion! That the most lowly and reverent of men should arrogate to himself, even for a moment, what was due to God alone! Surely his failure should warn us that our strength is weakness. Surely he should say to us, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.'

Some feel that in this matter Moses was hardly dealt with, and that the inexorableness of God is painful to contemplate. No doubt it is meant to impress us in that way. This is the tragedy in the life of the grandest man of Old Testament times. Who is not moved as he looks at this heroic soul, who has borne the burden of Israel for forty years, shut out inexorably from the one good on which his heart is set? Whose soul is not awed within him as he considers that this is a real piece of human life, a situation which may be repeated in any man's experience, even in his own? For it is repeated. Believe it in time, young men and women. There are good things, the best things, the only things you will one day care for, that sin makes impossible. A single bad action can forfeit hopes that you will never be able to redeem. It can draw an invisible line round about you—a line invisible to everyone except God and you—that you cannot cross. There are people everywhere who can sympathize only too keenly with Moses, because they know the situation too well. One sin arises, and they know that it shuts the gates of promise in their faces. A shadow has covered all their past, and will not fade while they are in this world. There are streams of joy from which they cannot drink, services to God which they cannot render, heights to which they can never rise, because of their perhaps long-repented sin. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. Moses is presented to us here learning one of the hardest of all lessons—the acceptance of God's will as it is determined by our own sins. Often our repentance is no better than a desire to escape the penalty of our faults. But our hope lies in accepting, not in rebelling and struggling against, the consequences which God has attached to our sins.

¶ There is one consequence which is often too much forgotten, and yet which never fails to follow sin done, even if we turn and repent. I mean the *spiritual* consequence. Of the other consequences some may be, by fortune, avoided, some by earnest endeavour repaired; but the spiritual consequence is irreparable. I do not mean we cannot repent truly, and feel God's love and forgiveness round us again; but we can never so repent as to be as if we had not done the deed. For consider, our life is but short, too short to perfect us in the struggle against evil, even if we fought single-hearted our whole life long. There is to each

[1] S. L. Gulick, *The Growth of the Kingdom of God*, 307.

of us a summit of good which if we try without falter we can just attain. Any shortcoming in the attempt is just so much taken away from what is possible to us. Each time in the choice between evil and good that we choose the evil, it is not that we are quite cast away, for we may repent, but this in any case is sure, we sink one step lower in the army of God, one crown that we might win is henceforth beyond our reach.[1]

To learn humility, to learn that God knows the discipline which is best for us, to learn to walk softly and accept as His will restrictions and losses which our sins have brought with them—that is the secret for restoring the soul. There is a passage in the Book of Leviticus which expresses this with the utmost plainness: 'if they shall confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespass against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if, then, their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant.' That is the essential point—if they then accept of the punishment of their iniquities. Rebellion does no good. Unbelieving despondency does no good. What is required is that the punishment of our sin be recognized as what it is, and taken as God's will for our good.

It is never pleasant: how could it be? It is terrible when we remember it is given by One who calls Himself 'the Lord thy Healer.' The most awful thing in the world, it has been said, is the unpardoned sin, and the next is sin which has been pardoned. To accept the punishment of our iniquity is to have experience of both of these, and we need it to make us hate sin as we should. For, remember, though Moses' prayer was not granted, we are not to suppose that his sin was not forgiven. We may be sure it was. When Moses offered the prayer recorded here he was at peace with God and God with him. One consequence of his folly was inevitable, and he had simply to bear it, relying upon God who forgives iniquity and transgression and sin. But he bore it in such reliance upon God, and that is an evidence of true forgiveness. He was able to bear it—hence it was God's will.

It may be that God's love led him to see a new mode of existence in which sin should not tempt those who love God. It is striking that in the New Testament Moses appeared in glory and talked with Jesus of the death He should accomplish in Jerusalem. Thus all the limits which sin had imposed upon his life had vanished; thus he saw how far the grand work of God had progressed; thus his mind still looked forward to the great event in which that great work should be consummated in the death of Jesus on the Cross.

'Let it suffice thee; speak no more:
This Jordan thou shalt not pass o'er.'

And yet upon the Mount these three,
Moses, Elias, Christ, I see!

Two roads to Canaan Thou hast given—
One over Jordan, one from heaven.

That was Moses' hope as it is ours. That was the foundation for his glory; and it is the only hope of glory for us. The love of God, revealed in the death of Jesus for the sin of the world, does not forsake those who humbly accept what sin has brought upon them. It holds them fast. Their confidence, their humility, their faith and resignation bring them, as it brought Moses, to glory. They wash their robes and are made white. It is not true that the consequences of sin are immutable. If that were so there would be no gospel. By God's will they abide for a time, but there is a world in which curse shall be no more. It is not true that the limitations of sin and its deformities are seen even in heaven. There the wounds of the spirit are healed so that no scar remains. There the saints are with Christ in glory.

[1] A. Sidgwick, *School Homilies*, 75.

## Lebanon.

Deut. iii. 25.—'That goodly mountain, and Lebanon'.

Mount Lebanon is the name of a great mountain mass on the extreme north of Palestine. It consists of two parallel ranges, about ninety

miles in length, running nearly north and south. They enclose between them a fertile plain called the Bekâ, or Coele-Syria. The western range alone bears in classical authors the name Lebanon; that to the east being named Anti-Lebanon. This distinction is not made in the sacred writings, in which, however, the highest and southern summit of the eastern range is called Mount Hermon, and treated as a distinct mountain. It is not improbable that Moses' epithet, 'that goodly mountain,' applies to Hermon rather than to Lebanon proper; but the characteristics of the two mountains are the same.

Lebanon rises from the Levant, whose waves lave its base, to an altitude of 10,000 feet. It towers to just within the limits of perpetual snow, which caps its summit and extends some little way down the gullies and crevasses on its north side. Its name, 'White Mountain,' seems, like the Alpine 'Mont Blanc,' to be derived from its snowy peak, rather than from the whitish tint of its limestone rocks, which it shares with much of the scenery in Palestine.

This mountain far excels others in Palestine in its combination of majesty and beauty, the union of which constitutes its distinctive 'goodliness.' Horeb, Sinai, and Hor, like huge mountain skeletons, with no rounded flesh-like covering, and unvestured by vegetation, impress the beholder with a sense of savage grandeur, desolation, and death. Carmel possesses beauty and fertility but lacks majesty; but here we gaze on a mountain as sublime as it is beautiful—

Whose head in wintry grandeur towers,
And whitens with eternal sleet,
While summer, in a vale of flowers,
Is sleeping rosy at his feet.

1. Lebanon was the great barrier which bounded the land of Israel's inheritance to the north. The lot of Jehovah's people had been chosen for them by One who cared for and loved them; yet as Israel was 'the fewest of all peoples,' so their land was among the least of all lands. It was not a land that could be extended in any direction, its extreme limits being strictly defined by the blue Mediterranean on the west, by yellow or red deserts on the south and east, and by the great mass of Lebanon on the north. We are taught here a lesson of contentment with our condition, with our home and its surroundings, with the measure of means and influence assigned to us by God. There is room for the exercise of honourable ambition and enterprise by all; but these must be guided into the directions indicated by Providence, and neither as individuals nor as nations may we covet possessions of any kind belonging to our neighbours. The spirit of discontent with what God has given us richly to enjoy, and the grasping at what He has bestowed upon others, are sources of great disquiet and danger, alike to the individual, the family, and the nation.

That thee is sent, receyve in buxomnesse,
The wrastling for this worlde axeth a fall.
Her is non hoom, her nis but wildernesse:
Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stall!
Know thy contree, look up, thank God of all:
Weyve thy lust, and let thy gost thee lede;
And trouthe shall delivere, it is no drede.[1]

2. The 'glory of Lebanon' consisted as much in the variety and richness of its fruit-bearing trees as in the majesty and eternity of its cedars; and the Great Husbandman looks that His people should produce the fruits of the Spirit in varied profusion. The olives and mulberries, citrons, vines and apples, all the fruits of garden and orchard on Lebanon, are fit yet faint images of the 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,' which are produced in the garden of man's heart, under the dews of the Holy Spirit and the shining of the Sun of Righteousness.

But in the Lebanon the fruit-bearing is the result of careful and long-continued culture. The building of the terraces in which the fruit-trees are planted has been, we are told, a work of immense labour, and all the toilsome and patience-taxing processes of agriculture are selected by the sacred writers as figures of the prolonged providential and gracious processes by which the hard and stony heart is trans-

[1] Chaucer.

formed into a garden of the Lord, fruitful in every good work. Nature shared in the fall of her lord, the curse of sterility being, for his transgression, pronounced over her; and it may, therefore, be expected that the methods of reclaiming physical nature and human nature will have a close resemblance. We are not to expect those rich fruits of grace to be produced spontaneously, or even suddenly, in barren hearts and lives. We are to exercise the 'long patience' of the husbandman in waiting for their production, whether in others or in ourselves. The sweet singer of Israel compares God's people in the world to a handful of corn on the top of the mountains, the fruit whereof should shake like Lebanon, and whose citizens should flourish like the grass. The Church, which the world regards but as a poor patch of mountain-sown corn, should bear such heavy crops that the breeze, rustling the ears, should sound like the blast tossing the mighty boughs of Lebanon's cedars. For reproductiveness and permanence, David likens the Church to the grass that clothes this mountain's vales and slopes.

¶ Ruskin testifies to the aptness of this illustration when he writes:[1] 'You roll the grass, and it is stronger the next day; you mow it, and it multiplies its shoots, as if it were grateful; you tread upon it, and it only sends up richer perfume. Spring comes, and it rejoices with all the earth . . . waving in soft depth of fruitful strength. Winter comes, and though it will not mock its fellow plants by growing then, it will not pine and mourn, and turn colourless and leafless as they. It is always green; and is only the brighter and gayer for the hoar-frost.' May Christ's Church exhibit these qualities in the present, as she has been enabled to do in the past!

3. Under the figure of the scent of Lebanon, the pervasive sweetness of true piety is set forth. 'His beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon.' We are admonished that our graces be *attractive* as well as productive. A native of Lebanon noted how the prophet drew his image from 'the abundance of aromatic things and odoriferous flowers' in his mountain home, the perfume of which meets the traveller as he enters these valleys. And if their scent is fugitive, we are reminded that the power of grace to communicate a heavenly fragrance to the surrounding social atmosphere is to be permanent: 'the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.' Many Christians forget or ignore the attractive power and flower-like fragrance of the Christian life, and are not careful to exhibit this in their daily conduct, and this is very detrimental to their influence for good.

¶ When death had called McCheyne away, a note was opened which the post had brought to the door during his illness. It was written by one who was a total stranger, to thank him for the hour of worship at Broughty Ferry: 'I heard you preach last Sabbath evening, and it pleased God to bless that sermon to my soul. It was not so much what you said, as your manner of speaking, that struck me. I saw in you a beauty in holiness that I never saw before.'[1]

4. One more element in the 'goodliness' of Lebanon was the abundance of streams that rose on its heights, watered its valleys, and sent rivers of life to the surrounding lands—the Jordan flowing south through Palestine, the Barrada (Abana and Pharpar) flowing east to Damascus, the Kadisha and the classical Adonis flowing to the north and west. The 'streams from Lebanon,' therefore, celebrated in Holy Writ (Cant. iv. 15), were used as an instructive metaphor of the manner in which the Church of God should send forth streams of influence and life into regions that had been as valleys of death. The stream from the Smitten Rock shows us that such supplies of life must flow from Jesus Christ; but the 'streams from Lebanon teach us that from His Church also such living waters flow forth. Jesus Himself is the Source of the water of life; but when we have come to Him and drawn out of His fullness, the water which He gives us is to be 'in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life,' so that out of us, too, 'there shall flow rivers of living water.'

¶ In a recent novel by Tickner Edwardes,

[1] *Modern Painters.*

[1] A. Smellie, *Robert Murray McCheyne*, 203.

*The Seventh Wave*, there is told the story of a Sussex 'piker,' a man who had lived in a cave on the Downs and made a living by selling blackberries or mushrooms, and varied it by poaching. He is befriended in a serious illness, and comes out of the workhouse infirmary 'wanting at last to live good and straight, because I knowed as I owed my life to what good and straight folk had done for me. I kept on asking myself, what made 'em do it? And I found out that it was naun but a thing as they called their religion—something as made people do good to them as didn't deserve it, without any thought of reward.'

## Seeing but not Going.

Deut. iii. 27.—'Behold it with thine eyes; for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.'

When the land was at last in sight, and the people had but to go in and possess it, God's word came to Moses: 'Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.' After eighty years of untold disappointment, humiliation, and suffering, after eighty years of nothing but faith, he was to die in faith. In the circumstances it sounds like irony to say with a poet: 'God's angel kissed him, and he slept'; but there is more in the description than a pretty expression. As the great leader breathed his last he still believed that the nation for which long ago he had sacrificed everything men count dear would achieve all he had dreamed and all he had worked for. Faith realized what did not exist. For eighty long, searching years faith was the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The great men of the world are the men who see what they will never possess. As Goethe says, 'their yonder is never here.' They see a nation sober, and a day when the arts of peace shall have shamed out of the world the barbarisms of physical strife. They see a time when men's lives shall not be murdered in the struggle to exist; a time when it shall be held criminal for one man to have more than enough of the increment of land and toil while his neighbour has too little; a time when for ashes there shall be beauty, for mourning the oil of joy, for heaviness the garment of praise. And Moses was a great man. There is no faintest tone of disappointment or reproach in his answer to the decree of God: 'Behold it with thine eyes; but thou shalt not go.' His mighty soul went home filled with its dreamland, while as yet not a sod was turned of that land which was to flow with milk and honey. Blessed are we if we behold, though we may not go. If we are true to the heavenly vision, we may safely leave the rest with Him at whose right hand are the eternal years.

1. In the first place, it is for us to take this stand who are engaged in the work of the world. The more strongly a man feels and sees that which is wrong in theory, the more keenly will he feel that which is wrong in practice. The more clearly he feels the glory of the eternal years, the more pitifully will he regard the passing days. And if he be a reformer—which, if he be a seer, he will be—there will be times when he feels as the disciples felt when they looked upon the few loaves and fishes, and then at the multitude: 'What are these among so many?' 'What can I do against all this wrong and suffering? Who am I against the multitudes who not only see wrong, but have shares in its inquisition of blood?' Well, you can believe that it *is* wrong, and hate it with your immortal soul. You can put the vision into your hatred, and though you will never behold the wrong gone in your day, yet you are working for its overthrow: and overthrown it shall be, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! You can do more: you can look at what has been done. Count up the gains that have been won for truth and humanity during the past fifty years. See how this restriction and that injustice have disappeared as the touch of justice has broken the pretensions of time and power. How many dreams have come true! The dreamers may be in their graves; we are living in their fulfilment. Let us go on dreaming and working and praying. It is all coming to pass. The world is moving onward and upward behind many a strange sign we cannot interpret; but it is moving. When we look at it with the eye of sense, we see it sinking under the influences of a bad sky; but when we look


87548

at it with the inward vision, we, too, see the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God. And what an unspeakable joy it will be, as we stand with Christ to look over life's history, to know that in the life we lived in the flesh we had some vision and, by God's grace, some courage of our vision—never its full realization, yet a faith that was the substance of things hoped for, and to many another the evidence of things not seen!

¶ John Bright, standing in the shadow of a great personal sorrow, looks out upon the collective sorrow made by wrongs that are man-made, and which man could do so much to remove, and he says: 'God helping me, I will never rest until this iniquity is driven out of the land.' That was a man of vision, standing on the site of Calvary. And so long as God elects to save the world through men, the only hope of any nation or community is in its men of vision, standing on the site of Calvary. For at the centre of every true vision there is more than the sign of the Cross—there *is* the Cross![1]

2. Then, further, Christian men must take this standpoint in distinctively religious work: the standpoint that to 'behold, . . . not go' does not arrest the work, nor lessen in the world the moral value of whatever progress we have made. There are those who, with their rude and crude performances, with their earnest, if blundering, endeavours, with their dim guesses and half-discoveries, do prepare the way for subsequent splendid successes on the part of others. These men had the vision but not the power; we have the power because they had the vision. For the sacred credential, the unmistakable evidence, of a Divine call to work is the power of a man to behold further than he can go, and in the strength of his vision to act as if it were realization.

When we see men at war against the huge evils of our day, if we have no vision, what very children they seem, tilting with straws against these giants cased in adamant! Dreamers are they to the world, or fools. But let us wait, and what the fleeting moments of man deny, the great years of God will bring. And have they not brought much already? Are not the dreams of these faith-dreamers the only dreams that come true? Is not theirs the only foolishness that gives us that wisdom which is the real nexus between time and eternity? For if there were nothing beyond, if death ended all, this Christian life would still be man's true life—the life built upon the conviction that it is better to do good than ill, better to make happiness than to create misery.

But when we link our life to eternity, what an unspeakable and unthinkable value attaches itself to our work here, however lonely and unnoticed!

The great Apostle counted it his joy to be deemed worthy to suffer with Christ; and would it be no part of his hereafter to magnify the grace by which he had fought the good fight and kept the faith? For it is conceivable that heaven itself will not be inseparable from the keen sorrow in many a heart that we dreamed so few dreams and did so little here compared with what we might have done. While our short day is lengthened out to us, let us be wise.

¶ Dr. H. T. Hodgkin, in his book on the *Christian Revolution*, recalls that in the early days of the London County Council an enthusiast for civic righteousness was sketching in a council meeting his picture of the London he longed to see. The cynic who always seems to be waiting round the corner when we dare to disclose our deepest feelings taunted him with being a mere dreamer. Whereat he went home, so we are told, and wrote four lines that have found their way into many corners of the world. They were these:—

'Dreamer of Dreams!' We take the taunt with gladness,
Knowing that God, beyond the years you see,
Hath wrought the dreams that count with you for madness,
Into the substance of the life to be.

[1] Ambrose Shepherd.

## Religion and Long Life.

Deut. iv. 1.—'Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live.'

'THAT ye may live.' We are all accusto-

med to connect the thoughts of religion and immortality. Faith bridges the river of death and leads on to the light. All the teachings of our religion are bound up with promises of an endless life, to which this is but preface and preparation. But the thought of Moses in this address to the children of Israel—an address in which he repeats and amplifies the Ten Commandments—is that religion has a great deal to do with long life in this world. Not that the rites of the Church are policies of insurance that one shall live long. That would make them of little value as spiritual helps, and would cause men to seek them merely as the guarantee of selfish comforts and pleasures. Other reasons may be involved in the plan of God which regulates the length of many lives, so that it cannot always be that the saintliest is sure of being oldest before death comes. There are cases in which death counts for more, accomplishes more for principles and for men, than life could do. And the matter of physique and temperament will always be a factor in prophecies of long living. But, relatively speaking, and in a general sense, religion has much to do with the length of one's days.

1. The Ten Commandments are not an exhibition of an arbitrary and selfish requirement of Jehovah, although, owing to our lack of experience, that may be the light in which they first appealed to us. It needs life and experience to clarify many of our ideas, and to discover to us the kindly motive in the mind of God leading to many of the restrictions and demands which at first appeared only irksome and hampering. The wider vision of maturer years has softened the hearts of all of us toward the parents who used so often to baulk our plans in childhood. Perhaps we thought sometimes that the chief office of parents was to obstruct and annoy; but better knowledge of the world has led us to applaud their action, and we find ourselves pursuing the same tactics with our own children. So it is easy to see in each of these Commandments the mind of God working out not merely the things which would please Him, but what would make the most real contribution to man's personal good and the welfare of society. Indeed, every one of them has a great deal more to do with human welfare than with the pleasure of a Divine Being.

The question is not as to whether one may live longer than another, but as to the course of life which will be one's own best promise of lengthened days. Everybody knows that there are bad habits which undermine the very foundation of good health. The problem of longevity is very often one of avoidance or of reformation. There would be no such fads as faith cure and so-called Christian Science but for the fundamental truth that the body is often strong or weak as the mind may influence it to be. Every man, then, is handicapped in the race of life who has to keep up a running fight with his own conscience. Man needs a spur instead of a weight. He needs concentration of mind upon one great purpose, and he can only be hindered by the goading of an outraged mentor who clamours always for appeasement and correction. If a dog barks ever at his heels, his speed must often be lessened and a sight of the goal be lost.

The law of the Sabbath was not instituted because one day is better than another, or because God has more of leisure then to hear us, but because of a basic need in the constitution of every man. 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'—so Christ declares. Man is not fitted into the institution and cramped in discomfort as in a mould. He is bigger than the institution, and it is ordained for his help. The Creator wrought during six of the creative periods and rested on the seventh that He might be a Great Exemplar for the race that toil and rest should alternate for the good of all. The physiologist has explained for us the functions of the human body, and has shown us how the processes of waste and repair are constantly going on. We had learned the fact, before he gave us the philosophy, that sleep is a great restorer, and that worn and weary nature demands cessation of labour, recumbency, and forgetfulness, in order to repair the waste of one day and store up vitality for another. But nature demands still more; and to meet that need is the purpose of the Sabbath. One day must be set aside for

rest and recuperation, and for methods of life so different from other days as to bring rest in the changed currents of our thought.

¶ 'Religion,' it has been rightly said, 'depends on the Sabbath.' Unless, that is, people break off from work, they will not think about God. Unless the day comes to remind them of their relation to One outside themselves, they will fall into slavery to the present. The Sabbath is thus the security of religion, the means by which the relation between man and God is realized, the weekly stimulant to man's thought about God and the duties which grow from that thought. . . . When will law and individual restraint secure such a Sunday? When men realize that such is the will of God. . . . If I were going with a Gospel through the land, it should be the gospel of a Sabbath, a day of quiet, a day set apart from the search after health and wealth, a day devoted to meditation and communion with the Unseen.[1]

2. Religion makes contribution to longevity, not only by the safeguarding of its moral precepts, but also by its spiritual principles. High thoughts go with holy living. Spirituality gives motive for morality. If a man is to modify his life by voluntary action, an appeal to the spiritual nature has in it more promise of prompt impulse and permanent reformation than any other. And the trio of graces which shine with more or less effulgence in religious lives—faith, hope, and charity—form a combination which means more in the lengthening of ordinary life than all else.

Charity, that sweet spirit of kindliness which never touches but to heal, nor manifests itself without enrichment! Hope, which sits serene amid to-day's desolation, and refuses to be poor in the presence of despoilment; which admits the darkness, but predicts the dawn; which knows nothing incurable, acknowledges no defeat; which turns her face ever toward the sunrising and croons her trustful melody and waits! Faith, that acknowledges a Divine paternity, and goes about her work as if God were present and only veiled from vision!—What burdens they have eased! What lives they have lightened! Have they not often helped the doctor in the crisis, and driven death from the bed chamber? Have they not touched the eye with a new light, and tinted the cheek with a fresh bloom, and given to life a buoyancy and poise which made men wonder whence came the secret of immortal youth? Give to any human life these graces and you have solved the problem of longevity.

The great question is: What will check the ravages of untimely age? Do you know any better cure than the solace and safeguard of religion? It furnishes incentive for continued striving. It protects men from being crushed by what they cannot cure. It curls the mouth up at the corners. It keeps the spirits from curdling in the thunderstorm. It prevents a man from giving up the conundrums of life the moment they are presented. It inspires him to do disagreeable things as if he liked them. It helps him to take his medicine without making a wry face. It restrains him from cursing fate, and prevents him from imagining that fate is cursing him. It gives him sense enough to think that the man whom he is tempted to envy may have troubles of his own. It reminds him that a clean dollar and a good night's sleep are better than a big balance and insomnia. It causes him to remember that God cares so little for money that He makes everybody leave it behind. It holds him to square dealing, so that he can look every man in the face. It teaches him that this world is only for a little while, and that something better is to come.

[1] *Canon Barnett*, ii. 98.

## National Greatness.

Deut. iv. 8.—'And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?'

1. In this passage Moses teaches us that the real condition of a nation's greatness is to be found in the character of its laws. There are some who think that the greatness of a nation depends upon the extent of territory over which its authority spreads; and we are sometimes in danger of boasting that the sun never sets upon the British Empire, and that the beat of the morning drum of the British Army never ceases to rattle round the world. But the two greatest nations of antiquity, so far

as their subsequent influence upon human affairs is concerned, were the Jews and the Greeks, and they both belonged to little countries like Wales. There is no greater delusion than to suppose that national greatness depends upon geography.

2. In the second place, there are some who, with better reason, argue that national greatness depends upon high culture. To some extent it does, and we are therefore in the habit of giving Greece a great place in human history on account of her culture. And yet, for the highest influence, even Greece herself must yield to the claims of Palestine. There is something better than even the lofty culture of Athens, and that is the Ten Commandments. Then, again, there are others who are in danger of supposing that the greatness of a country is determined by victory on the battlefield. There may be circumstances in which a defensive war is justified; but to suggest that the great glory of any country is to be found on fields of blood is to indicate that you have sunk to the lowest depths of barbarism.

3. The Scriptural test is the only rational test of the greatness of any country under heaven. It is this: What kind of laws have you in that country? The national character determines, and is determined by, the laws of a country; just as the national conduct is expressed in the policy of a country. St. John says, 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous,' and the only Christian nation is the nation with a Christian statute-book, a Christian foreign policy, and a Christian home policy.

(1) But before we apply that test to the statute-book of our own country, let us examine a delusion which lies on the very threshold. How constantly we hear it said that 'you cannot make men moral by Act of Parliament.' When men try to prevent the advance of the temperance movement and other great moral enterprises they are very fond of rattling off that sentence. It is supposed to be a reply to moral fanatics; that is to say, to sober and wise patriots. When men glibly tell us that we cannot make people moral by Act of Parliament, it would be interesting to know what they mean. They probably do not know themselves. Do they mean that force in itself is no remedy? If so, let them live up to their convictions. But let us not forget that a law is a good deal more than force. An Act of Parliament is not mere force. It is educational. It teaches the conscience, it strengthens the conscience, and even the most degraded usually realize that what is illegal is wrong.

¶ If evidence is needed that the favourite expression that 'you cannot make men moral by Act of Parliament' is a falsehood, I need only refer you to that ever-memorable monument of the beneficent life of the late Lord Shaftesbury—the Factory Acts. The Factory Acts! Why, they have created a moral revolution in the 'Black Country.' In many parts of England women and children were degraded beyond expression; and because the national conscience embodied these protective Acts in the statute-book of this country, the whole moral condition of vast masses of the people has been entirely changed.[1]

(2) There is another common delusion. We often find the opponents of progressive and moral legislation saying, 'you must not legislate in advance of public opinion.' Now, whenever that plausible and dangerous sentiment is used for the purpose of diluting our enthusiasm and discouraging our zeal for human happiness, let us cross-examine the man who utters it. Let us ask him what he means by public opinion. Does he mean the public opinion of the House of Commons? If so, then it is our great privilege to pass Acts of Parliament very much in advance of the opinion of the House of Commons. Does he mean the opinion of Society, or of the West-End clubs, or of the editors of the London journals? If so, we can only say, as a matter of fact, that all these exponents of public opinion have resisted some of the most beneficent Acts of our time, but they have been defeated by the power of Jesus Christ.

¶ If there is one lesson more than another which the late Administration has bequeathed to its successors, it is that it is not in the power of any one party to dictate the policy of

[1] H. P. Hughes, *Social Christianity*, 141.

the country. In fact the country will govern itself. It naturally, and almost unconsciously, makes a certain progress, which successive Ministries can only a little simplify or perplex, quicken or retard. In spite of Governments a great necessity grows up and compels a hearing. Measures spring forth, no one knows how, in the mind of the nation, at first rudely but truly conceived, then gradually taking solidity and form, and lastly forcing themselves into legislative being. This progressive movement triumphantly rides over parties, or rather, to speak more truly, like the messenger of an Oriental potentate, it impresses everyone it falls in with, compelling him to leave his own errands and forward the business of the nation.' [1]

## The Lost Fear of God.

Deut. iv. 10.—'Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me.'

THERE is in these days a lacking emphasis of this matter of the fear of God. Not a few will readily admit that many of our pulpits are cautiously reticent upon the subject, that they preach the mild, to the exclusion of the severe, virtues of God. There is a consequent danger of downright unfaithfulness, for no one can understand God who has not learned to fear Him, and no one can understand God's grace who does not apprehend His wrath.

1. The necessity for speech and renewed emphasis upon this subject lies in the theological and religious temper of to-day. We cannot ignore the fact that the crudities and falsities connected with earlier teaching on the subject of judgment and punishment caused a reaction which gives far too little place and potency to fear in modern life and modern religion—to the disadvantage of both. That reaction has largely tended to the construction of a weak Deity, with the love-side of His character over-developed, and with little or no justice-side; a Being who might manage to get along fairly well if things ran smoothly, but a Being with no fibre or strength to grapple with evil and make the right prevail. If any such conception were applied to a man, we should at once see its proper feebleness. Charles Kingsley's conception of Major Campbell, his modern *preux chevalier*, was a worthier one and approves itself to all: 'A man very tender and pitiful to weak women and children, but very terrible to full-grown knaves.' The modern imagination would make its God weaker than Major Campbell. The modern God has no thunderbolts. There is nothing strong about Him.

¶ Dr. Dale was the last man in the world to appear the victim of intellectual or theological hysteria. His clear intellect, with its keen penetration and well-balanced judgment, added poignancy to the gravest concern of his last years, and a terrible solemnity to his words to Dr. Berry, when, with characteristic directness and impressive emphasis, he indicated the strangest and most ominous symptom of modern religion: 'Berry, nobody is afraid of God now.' [1]

Out of the mist, the mist, I cry,
Let not my soul of numbness die!
My life is furled in every limb,
And my existence groweth dim.
My senses all like weapons rust,
And lie disused in endless dust.
I may not love, I may not hate;
Slowly I feel my life abate.

O would there were a heaven to hear!
O would there were a hell to fear!
Ah, welcome fire, eternal fire,
To burn forever, and not tire!
Better Ixion's whirling wheel,
And still at any cost to feel!
Dear Son of God, in mercy give
My soul to flame, but let me live!

2. We have fallen into exaggerated and utterly un-Biblical views of the nature of God. The God of the Bible is infinitely different from the God of much modern religious thought. We have grown apt to worship a Christ half of whose Divine grandeur is under eclipse. 'Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scripture?' is a pertinent question to the mood which makes the child's prayer—

[1] *The Times*, July 4, 1846.

[1] J. Wills.

beautifully fitting for the child—the whole consciousness and law of older life. 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild' is not the whole Christ of the Scriptures. If the gospel opens with words of blessing, it proceeds to record words of woe solemn enough to startle the soul. Christ came, as He Himself has told us, not to destroy, but to fulfil; it is necessary that the softer sentiment of the grace that came by Christ should be understood as implying the law that came by Moses. The New Testament is built on the Old. Apart from the Old it could not be. The God who is Father in the New is Sovereign in the Old, and the New Fatherhood cannot be divorced from the Old Sovereignty. Indeed, if we are to understand the New Testament, we must come to it through the Old.

Now the very first note we discover in Scripture is the note of a Being of whom men were afraid. The patriarchs bowed down before the God who spoke to them in warnings and promises. They trembled and obeyed Him. A pious man in the Old Testament meant a man who *feared* God. That was the dominant note of his temper, the ruling motive of his life. If our religion does not begin where the patriarchs' began, it bodes ill for our religion. To realize what God is smites the soul with instant awe. It has been well said, 'The first thing needful for any human being must be to discover his proper place, to shrink before God's heart-piercing scrutiny, to quail at the light of His goodness.' Then how is Christ delineated by him who lay on the bosom of Christ, the disciple 'whom Jesus loved'? 'His eyes were as a flame of fire, . . . and he shall rule the nations with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.' 'His eyes were as a flame of fire, . . . and his voice as the sound of many waters, . . . and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead.' The close of the Bible does not contradict its commencement. The Angel of the Apocalypse flying in mid-air with the everlasting gospel to proclaim to them that dwell upon the earth, cried with a loud voice, '*Fear God, and give glory to him!*'

3. While Scripture speaks of such a thing as 'the wrath of the Lord,' we cannot do less than ponder it—if we have any interest in religion. What does the wrath of the Lord imply? It is a very real thing. It is a very terrible thing. It is God's resentment against sin. That resentment is kindled to its fiercest heat by the moral evil which has provoked it, and by the moral evil only. What do we mean, what do the Scriptures mean, by moral evil or, to use the Biblical word, 'sin'? Sin is no mere abstraction. It is not something in the air. It is an intensely personal thing. Where there is lying there must be a liar. Where there is habitual drunkenness there must be a drunkard. Where there is a murder there must be a murderer. God's wrath against sin is therefore also God's resentment against the man who has sinned—so long as the man is not forgiven. That resentment can no more be separated from God than heat from a fire. As Dr. Dale once put it, 'When men prayed God to forgive them, they did not mean that God should cease to feel resentment against sin, but that He should cease to feel resentment against themselves, although they had been guilty of sin.' God is merciful! We often say it. What does it really mean? It means a willingness on God's part to lay aside resentment against those who have sinned. But does it not follow that the greater the resentment, the greater the mercy? If there be little resentment, there can be very little mercy. If there be no resentment at all, mercy is impossible. And 'mercy' is a great and glorious Biblical word. A God who is not righteous enough to glow with fiery indignation against sin is no God worthy our worship. He does so glow, and because He so glows there is forgiveness with Him *that He may be feared.*

4. Three things plead for emphasis.

(1) Let us try to bring our thoughts back to the Biblical definition of the fear of the Lord. What is it? 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.' The fear of the Lord, then, is not to be afraid of *Him,* but to be afraid of *sin!* To know the fear of the Lord we must know where the Lord's fear for us lies. God hates sin. We must hate it too. Ah, but how? Some

men may be restrained from sin by the fear of hell. That fear certainly does exercise a salutary sway in many lives that turn from sin. But fear of hell will never lead a man to hate sin. Fear of hell may check transgression while the timorous flirt with the Devil. That is all. That is a different thing from *hating* sin. You remember the great lines of Robert Burns:

> The fear of hell's a hangman's whip
> To haud the wretch in order;
> But where ye feel your honour grip,
> Let that aye be your border.

That is what we want—this sense of honour. It comes—how? No man can have a passionate hatred of anything without a corresponding love of its opposite. How comes that love? By the vision and contemplation of Christ!

(2) It is a simple but universal law that we are made by our visions, our contemplations, that our love is fed by our thought, that what we contemplate we become. How, then, are you thinking about Christ? Is it with steady, concentrated contemplation of Him till the soul is filled with a burning love of Him, with speechless longing to be like Him—a passionate thirst nothing else can satisfy? That is faith! 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for.' It spells hope. It lifts the soul up in love. The entire direction of the life is determined by the set and drift of the mind. Looking unto Jesus . . .' 'beholding, we are changed into the same image. . . .'

> Lord Christ, breathe on me!
> Breathe, till my very flesh and heart
> Of Thee are part.
>
> Lord Christ, live in me!
> Live! till the Great Eternal Soul
> Through me doth roll.
>
> Lord Christ, die in me!
> Die! that my riven heart may know
> Thy Love and Woe.[1]

[1] Florence Cortis-Stanford, *Westering Winds*, 75.

## A Covenant People.

Deut. iv. 13.—'He declared unto you his covenant.'

The Book of Deuteronomy is a key to all the books that precede, and to all that follow it. A light is thrown back from it upon the dealings of God with the patriarchs, upon the deliverance from Egypt, upon the national law and priesthood and sacrifices, upon the sins and the discipline of the people in the wilderness. A light is thrown forward from it upon the causes of the nation's prosperity and misery under its first judges, in the brilliant times of David and Solomon, in the period after it became divided, in the days of its captivity, in the time when its faithful members began to look for the more spiritual glories of the second temple, in its present downfall and dispersion.

If we inquire whence it derives this importance as a part of the canon of Scripture, we shall, perhaps, find the answer to be this—that it is specially intended to set forth the condition of a people who are in covenant with God; to tell what is their strength and their weakness, their danger and their refuge, what are their responsibilities and their hopes; how this one fact in their history is connected with all the other facts of it, how it affects all their actions, interprets all their sufferings, gives a purpose and a meaning to their whole lives.

Amidst abundant proofs of tenderness and affection in the mind of the old legislator for the people whom he had guided forty years through the wilderness, we see one thought possessing and almost overpowering his mind—that of the grandeur and awfulness of the position into which it had pleased God to bring his nation. As his narrative compelled him to notice his own absence two successive times for forty days in the Mount, and the intimate communion which he had there enjoyed with the Lord God of Israel, we might have supposed that he would have dwelt on these, his personal privileges, and have scarcely remembered that the people who had remained below when he went into the thick darkness had been

acknowledged by God at all. On the contrary, he passes rapidly over his privileges, he touches upon them only as they affect the condition of the Israelites; and the feeling that is nearest his heart is one of wonder, not that he, but that the whole nation, should have been brought so nigh to the Lord of heaven and earth. 'For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? . . . Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire, and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.'

If we look with attention at this chapter we see that it was not the terror of these outward spectacles that impressed the mind of Moses himself, or that he wished to impart to his countrymen. What made Moses quake and fear when he saw the fire upon the mountain was not the sign, but that which it signified, not the devouring element, but the presence of God into which it showed that they were brought. He is most careful, therefore, to impress upon the Israelites that the wonder continued though the sign was departed; that they were standing in the awful presence of God as much then as when the covenant was first made, and that all generations afterward were to feel that they partook of this awful blessing as much as if they themselves had been brought out of Egypt, and had kept the Passover in the wilderness. This is the point to which his whole discourse tends; this, he teaches them, is the meaning of their being brought into covenant with God; they were to feel themselves continually nigh to Him, continually under His protection and discipline, and they were to declare to their children's children that they, like their fathers, were a people unto the Lord.

1. The privilege of the Israelite is said to be that he worships the Lord, and none else—that is to say, that he does not confound the unseen Being of whom his conscience and his heart speak, the Being of whom he feels himself to be the offspring, with the works of His hands; that he looks upon all things in Nature as inferior to himself, and to God as above himself; that he feels himself the lord of creation, and the servant of *the Lord*. This was the great privilege of the Jew, and it was a privilege which rested wholly on his being in covenant with God.

For how can a people really learn to distinguish God from His creatures, and to love and fear Him the more instead of the less for doing so? They can do so only when God pleases to bring them near to Himself, to make known to them how intimate the relation between Him and them is, to make them understand that He is indeed their God, and that they shall be His people, when He becomes Himself their Guide, and Teacher, and Friend, when He makes the events which befall them the means of revealing to them His own character. It is God's covenant, then, that was the means of making known to the Jews what manner of Being he was, that was the means of withdrawing them from the worship of things beneath to that of a mighty Person above.

2. Again, Moses teaches them in this Book —especially in this and the following chapters, and in that beautiful song which occurs at the close of it—that it is in virtue of this covenant that they could be a nation at all. He shows them that the acknowledgment of one God over them was the only security of their being one people. The moment they forgot that they were related to this God, that He was their Lord and King, and that He had taken them to be a people unto Him, that moment they would become divided and helpless, lose all respect for each other, and fall a prey to their enemies. The faith of this covenant, the

faith that God watched over them, and loved them, and had brought them out of Egypt by a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm, the faith that He was with them now, as He had been in past times—this would give them the brave feelings of men, this would make them understand that they were brethren; two would then chase a thousand, and ten put ten thousand to flight; for they would feel that the Lord was their Rock, and the Most High God their Saviour. All their courage and union as a nation rested on their faith in this covenant.

3. Once more, he says in the 6th verse that by keeping this covenant they would be reckoned a wise and understanding people in the sight of the nations. That is to say, the other nations would perceive in them a clearsightedness and vigour of mind which, beginning from the highest subjects, would extend to the most common and earthly affairs. They would be free from the vague terrors which men must needs feel who mix together visible things with invisible, and who fancy that every powerful thing around them may be a god. Feeling their own relationship to their Lord, knowing that He was their Friend, the thought of His presence, which made other men tremble, would make them calm and bold. They would look steadily back upon the past, and forward to the future, because they would feel that One 'who is, and was, and is to come' had been, and would be, their Protector.

## A Jealous God.

Deut. iv. 24.—'The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.'

In this chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy the aged law-giver and deliverer of Israel is represented as addressing his people on the eve both of his own death and of their entrance into possession of the land promised to them. There are few scenes more dramatic amid the many dramatic scenes of the Old Testament. Whether its setting be historically accurate or not does not concern us just now. But picture the scene. The whole people were gathered together in the plains east of Jordan. Not one of them had been a grown man when the Israelites left Egypt forty years before, save Joshua and Caleb and Moses himself. They had been wondrously led hitherto and oft-times delivered by God's good Providence; but now they were to lose their venerated leader, and were to cross the Jordan without him. They were to plunge into a country of unknown difficulties and dangers, deprived of his sagacious counsel, his varied experience, his favour with God. Meantime there was a solemn pause, a period of waiting. Soon he would be taken from them, and then would come the clash of arms, the perils and joys of conflict, the assurance, amid varying fortunes, of final victory. In the quiet interval Moses bids his people look back and look forward; look back and consider what great things Jehovah had already wrought for them; look forward with hopeful care for the future, assured still of God's loving protection, if only they themselves remain faithful to their side of the covenant.

But they must be faithful, for the Lord their God is a consuming fire. It is a startling description of God. But we must notice that the religion of the Old Testament is in one sense a paradox. It starts from the thought of God as an eternal and purely spiritual Being. A spiritual Being—no language is too emphatic to enforce that truth. Patriarchs and prophets alike insisted that no shape, no idol, no graven image, could represent the Divine nature; that if a house were indeed built for God's dwelling-place, even there the inner shrine was to be empty, empty as the Roman conqueror was to find it when, at the capture of Jerusalem, he parted the veil of the Holy of Holies and fell back with astonishment from the silence and vacancy within. God is a spirit, invisible, intangible, inexpressible in any material form. That is the first dogma of the Mosaic faith. And yet side by side with this conception, and coming just in time to save the Jew from making of God a mere empty abstraction, we find in these same teachers, patriarchs and prophets the thought of God as working, acting, watching, loving, with sentiments and motives very similar to those of men. Far from being an

abstraction, God was intensely personal, intensely human, to the Jewish mind. With the sublime courage of an inspired soul, Moses, far away in the dim morning of history, saved theology for his people, and through his people for the whole world of men, by asserting the humanity of God. He dared not, he cried, fashion a likeness of God after our human and finite thought. We cannot give shape or form to our dreams of Him. Yet God is not, therefore, impersonal. God can act. God can feel. God can love. God can be jealous. Yes, this is the crowning anthropomorphism of the Mosaic theology: 'The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.'

1. Jealousy is the satellite of love, through which it sometimes suffers eclipse, and possibly we are tempted to ask how so religious a mind as that of the Jew could admit an evil and degrading passion into its belief in God. That the Old Testament writers elsewhere represent God at times as acting in a spirit which, in the case of men, we could only call malevolent, or vindictive, or unjust, is obviously true. We are not at pains to deny that their theology was imperfect; rather we expect a recognition of its imperfection when we remember that at the very root of our creed lies the thought of a progressive revelation culminating in Jesus Christ. But in this case we are wrong to criticize. Jealousy is not an evil passion. Strictly speaking, no passion is either good or evil. In itself a passion is a colourless thing. It takes a colour for good or evil only from the motive by which it is governed or from the shape which it assumes. Wherever love is, there jealousy is possible. Jealousy is love sensitive for its own honour, and our real condemnation of jealousy as dark or vicious is simply due to its evil associations, due to the fact that it has generally assumed a wrong shape, or proved itself 'cruel as the grave.' But it need not be so. 'I will be jealous for my holy name' was the Divine message to Ezekiel. 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts' was the disappointed cry of Elijah in the wilderness. And we approve the intensity and fearlessness of a love which could brook no loss or insult to the one it loved.

¶ In the story of Othello, in the tragedy and 'the pity of it' in which a master hand has traced, once for all, the course of a master passion to its bitter end, we do not begin to judge Othello till, as the tale unfolds itself, his passion finds its issue first in a brooding suspicion of his wife, since

> Trifles light as air
> Are to the jealous confirmation strong
> As proof of Holy Writ—

and next in the rashness of a revenge in which, 'perplexed in the extreme,' he

> Threw a pearl away
> Richer than all his tribe.

We do not blame Othello for loving 'too well.' We blame him for loving 'not wisely.' Love that is true to itself cannot but be jealous; cannot but desire the constancy of its object; cannot but feel, in proportion to its own purity and strength, a righteous pain and sorrow at seeing affections which belonged to itself dying or transferred elsewhere.[1]

2. The Divine jealousy is that which demands the entire sincerity, the complete self-surrender, of His worshippers, which suffers the authority of no other claims, the rivalry of no other affections, which can tolerate no idol in the human heart. 'Thou shalt have none other gods but me' was the message to the Jew. It brought a lesson much needed, as the repeated idolatries of those early records warn us, but also a lesson well learned. For century after century this singular people has remained the steadfast worshipper of an eternal God. But that message is not limited to any time or country. As the preacher looks at his congregation to-day, the thought must often flash across his mind, 'Do these people really believe in God?' And what an awful thing it must be for them if they do! God a consuming fire, a jealous God—jealous of our time, our interests, our occupations; permitting no usurper on the throne which He alone should possess; claiming at least an obedience to His will capable of making itself felt in all we do, and of going with us wherever we may go.

[1] S. A. Alexander.

¶ The jealousy of God as found in the Hebrew prophets is not lest men should aspire too high. It is jealousy lest anything should come between men and God, lest men should stray after false gods, lest they should fail of their high destiny. Such jealousy does not keep men from God, it draws them to Him. It is a consuming fire toward all that comes between God and man. The Hebrew God is not afraid as to His own standing. The Creator is not afraid of His own creatures. He has made men in His image, after His likeness. He draws near to men that they may draw near to Him. . . . If God is the One and the All, if He is pure Being, if He alone is true reality, and the world of movement is unreal, then man in order to know God must leave the world of time and change. He must cease to be an individual, he must lose himself, must sink into ecstatic swoon, in order to realize his identity with God. He can know God only by ceasing to be himself. He must give up all that belongs to his separate, individual life. God and man cannot come together unless man ceases to be man and becomes identical with God.[1]

## The Past.

Deut. iv. 32.—'Ask now of the days that are past.'

Deuteronomy is not a law book in the ordinary sense of the term. The voice that speaks to us in chapter after chapter is not so much the voice of a law-giver formulating a code of rules as it is the voice of a prophet or preacher.

Whoever the author of the book may have been, one thing is clear—he was a man of deep patriotic feeling, who possessed in a remarkable degree the special prophetic gift of foresight based upon insight. The book is full of warnings and threatenings addressed to the people of Israel. But these warnings and threatenings are not like the utterances of modern party journalists, who solemnly tell us that the country is going to ruin because certain political measures are either being pushed on or postponed. The author of Deuteronomy was one who had thought deeply on that most serious of questions, What really makes for the permanent good of the people? and he was keenly alive to the evils of his own time. Every warning that he gave came fresh from his own mind and heart, and was charged with the burden of his own personal experience either of joy or of sorrow. And if there was one conviction that was dearer to him than others, it was that no people and no commonwealth can be in a state of well-being unless it is grounded on a great moral belief; and that the most effective of all moral beliefs is the belief in a Righteous God, the actual King and Ruler of men. This belief, when realized in act, ensures that the laws, the institutions, the manner of life of those who hold it, shall be righteous in aim and in principle.

A great English judge and lawyer has said, 'The government of a great country can never be carried on as it should be without reference more or less direct and frequent to moral and religious considerations. All the problems of government and of law revolve round the questions that lie at the root of religion—the being and character of God, and His will towards us. The lawyer who is not a mere tradesman needs a religious creed as much as the priest.' What is this but another way of saying that the groundwork of all obedience to human laws is knowledge of the fact, dwelt upon so emphatically all through this book, that God, in placing men under a Divine law, and making them conscious of His invisible guidance, has bestowed upon them the greatest possible good? To know this, the prophet urged, was everything. To hold it fast was the chiefest of blessings, to lose it or to forget it was to sink back into the servile condition out of which the people of Israel had been mercifully raised.

That is why we are reminded all through this book of the uninterrupted continuity between what God is doing now and what He had done in the days of old. For those who are blind to that are certain to be blind to a good deal else that most nearly concerns them. They are in danger of losing their reverence for the past, and of despising the patrimony of knowledge and belief bequeathed to them by their fathers. Therefore in Deuteronomy

[1] E. S. Drown, *The Creative Christ*, 45.

the chord of memory is struck again and again. The fathers of Israel are solemnly charged to teach their children the things that God had done for them in past ages; and at the same time to impress upon them that He will be the present and living Guide of each successive generation as truly as in the days of old. This is one of the great features of the Book of Deuteronomy which make it so valuable a lesson-book for our own times—its appeal to history. We can never apprehend God's dealings with the nations and families in the present unless we study them in the light shed on them by the accumulated experience of the past. If we want to know man, and what causes make for his welfare or for his ruin, we must study man in history. We must ask of the ages that have gone before, and be guided by their verdict.

Further, we must do this in a religious spirit, with our minds prepossessed with the belief in a righteous God who has discovered Himself to man, whose children and whose subjects we all are. History reveals that the world is a scene of order. The Bible brings us to the source and centre of that order. We do not find it in ourselves, but when it is shown to us we are compelled to pay homage to it, for it brings light where all before was chaos and darkness. Apart from the illuminating idea of an orderly movement in human affairs, and of God as presiding over that movement, the whole past becomes a bewildering dream.

On the other hand, when we survey the past in a believing spirit, it bears unmistakable witness to a Divine purpose working in and through the sundry and manifold changes of the world. We learn from the Bible that history, viewed as a whole, is not a record of chances and accidents, and blind movements that have no preordained goal. Rather it is a record of moral progress, a record of the gradual triumph of spiritual over material forces, of reason and conscience and the sense of moral obligation over mere animal instinct and the desire of every man to be a law to himself. And in all this, to those who have eyes to see, the finger of God is traceable. For progress is the law prefixed to life by God Himself. 'In the unreasoning movements of the world a wiser Spirit is at work for us.'

Thus history is the study which shows a man the whole of which he is a part, and throws a clear light on the great process of which his own life is but a brief moment. We learn from it how, in the past, men have grown from barbarism to civilization, out of separate warring tribes into a sense of national unity. We learn how the life of nations has expressed itself, in what customs, symbols, and characteristic actions. We learn what causes have fostered or hindered the well-being of communities, how men have struggled and suffered for truth and righteousness, what mistakes they made in doing so, how they were punished for them and bequeathed the lesson to others.

History is thus a part of the great disclosure which all arts, all sciences, all literature are gradually making. It is helping us day by day to see things as they are, to rise to a higher point of view, to find in the past the key to the meaning of the present, and, in a word, to see order and law where the uninstructed see only a dull and bewildering confusion.

Having looked on the past let us turn to the future. Let us remember that the things behind us are for the sake of the things in front. What human imagination would have dared to predict that out of the original chaos could come such a world as we see? And if all that is behind, what is there before? Are we not to hope something out of such a record? To the Apostle the past, with all its wonder, was as nothing to the future. Let us share that certitude. It is well founded. 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.' Now we have the sense and feeling of God deep in our hearts. It is a germ, but one, be sure, that will have full fruition. All science, all history, all religion bid us stretch on to the things that are before.

## Courage from the Past.

Deut. iv. 32.—'Ask now of the days that are past.'

YES, but what shall we ask about, and what kind of spoil shall we bring back from the treasures of the past? What have we in our purses or in our wallets when we return?

In the *Life of Lord John Russell,* says Dr. Jowett,[1] I came upon a phrase which set me inquiring about my own habits. In a speech which he made in the House of Commons he said: 'We talk too much, I think a great deal too much, of the wisdom of our ancestors. I wish we could imbibe the courage of our ancestors.' It is a very suggestive word, and one which may justly lead us to overhaul our ways. For it too often happens that when we go seeking for the wisdom of the past we bring back its prudence and reluctance. We go for counsel and we return with caution. We seek advice on our new outlook and then we stand in the 'good old ways.' Now suppose we take Lord John Russell's suggestion, and visit our ancestors in order that we may imbibe their courage, what sort of courage should we bring back to the new demands of our own time?

1. First of all, I think we should have courage to make new trails over untrodden country. That was one of our ancestors' most shining characteristics. They were not afraid to break new ground. They would even obey the grip of a dumb imperative, not seeing the distant scene. They went forth, 'not knowing whither they went.' They were not afraid to take risks with God. They were not afraid to be pioneers into more scrupulous rectitude and larger freedom. They marched out, with trumpets blowing, over the roadless moors, trusting to the guidance of the Lord they served. And we, too, are face to face with untraversed country. We have new ground to break. The wilderness is before us, but we think we hear the call of the garden in the very realm of the desert! Shall we venture? Let us imbibe the courage of our ancestors and dare to leave their ways behind as they left the ways of those who had gone before.

Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns
in my veins!
Away, O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every
sail!
Have we not stood here like trees in the ground
long enough?
Have we not grovell'd here long enough eating
and drinking like mere brutes?
Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves
with books long enough?

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee, and
thou with me,
For we are bound where mariner has not yet
dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!
O farther, farther sail!
O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the
seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail.[1]

2. If we drink the valour of our ancestors we shall have courage to stand by the Truth even when the crowd has gone another way. We can go to the past and talk with Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, or we can have fellowship with Mr. Valiant-for-truth. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman is always in favour of safe measures, and he would go with the majority in the hope of something turning up—'you never know what!' His offered 'wisdom' is always small prudence and compromise. But we need the courage of our ancestors, courage to march with Truth in little companies, courage to 'rejoice with the truth,' in the absolute assurance that, in spite of all appearances, she marches to inevitable triumph. It is the courage which believes that Truth is God's leaven of the Kingdom, and therefore indestructible.

Soldier of God, sore-smitten and dismayed,
Hold forth thy shield, let not thy point
decline:
See how the morning marches to thine aid:
See how the lances of the light are thine![2]

3. Lastly we must imbibe the courage that sees the Captain, and is comparatively careless about everything else. Where is the Lord Jesus Christ in this business? There! Then forward into hardships, forward into light!

[1] *The Eagle Life,* 25.

[1] Walt Whitman.
[2] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers,* 33.

## The Knowledge of God.

### I.

### *The Witness of the Understanding.*

Deut. iv. 39.—'Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else.'

WHAT is the manner in which our understanding witnesses to the existence of God?

All activity, no matter of what kind, consists in exercising the power of the will over outward objects—in moving them and rearranging them—that is all. All physical activity is the movement of physical objects, brought about by the exercise of the will. So constant is our experience of the power of the inward will to create outward movement that we link the two together in an indissoluble bond of thought. From the observation of a movement the mind springs instantaneously to the inference of a living power, akin to ourselves, as the cause of that movement. To take a simple illustration. We are sitting in a room, and of a sudden a stone crashes through the window. We infer at once, and with absolute certainty, that someone threw that stone. The alternative that the stone jumped up and broke the window of its own accord does not even occur to us. If anyone suggested it, we would exclaim: 'Why, the stone is not alive!' We demand something living, some self, some will, as the cause of what has happened. It is not possible to the human mind to conceive of any motion of outward things otherwise than as caused in the last resort by some living will. It does not, indeed, always appear that will is the *immediate* cause of the motion that we see. Sometimes there are several links between. For instance, we see a machine taking in sheets of paper at one end, and turning them out at the other end cut and folded. If we showed them to a savage he might think that the living will is in the machine itself with its great jerking iron limbs. We know better. But just as much as he, we are compelled to take for granted a living will at the beginning of it all.

But the vast majority of the movements in the midst of which we live can be referred to no human wills whatever. The swaying of the trees, the sailing of the clouds, the dashing of the waves, the flooding of the sunlight, all the countless movements of inanimate Nature which go on around us—behind them all we cannot help supposing there is some sleepless will power. The very constitution of our minds compels us to attribute the infinite variety of movement by which we are encompassed to some living force operating its mighty energy through all the structure of the worlds. If we are not perpetually impressed, in spite of ourselves, with the sense of such a living power in the universe, it is because many of the movements of physical nature are comparatively slow. The movement by which a young tree adds but a single inch to its girth in the course of a year is too slight to be even an object of direct observation. It can only be inferred. And thus the sense of the unseen, living power which is behind, energising the tree and compelling its growth, is not so prominently suggested to us as if we could watch this growth taking place before our eyes. In the old days of the world's childhood men felt the need of explaining the most striking natural movements that they beheld as wrought by some will-power working through the objects which they saw. When the avalanche fell thundering to the plain they thought that some god was sporting on the mountain and had rolled it down. When the lightning flashed across the sky they thought that some god was hurling his thunderbolts against his enemies. We, who are not living in the childhood of the world, have learnt the scientific explanation of these phenomena. We know that the avalanche falls because the warm sun has melted the snow that bound that mass to the summit of the cliff, and so there is no restraining bond to resist the force of gravitation upon the accumulation hanging over the brow of the steep. We know that the lightning flashes because the electric fluid leaps from cloud to cloud when its proper balance has been disturbed. But after all, these are mere scientific statements which explain nothing and leave us still in search of the actual power that wrought the change.

And so, by the very constitution of our minds, we always come back to the thought of will as cause—the only cause conceivable—of the infinite motions in the universe, from the sweep of the sun through space to the dance of the molecules in a drop of water. Will is the universal cause. And we know that will to be one, and not many, from the manifestations of perfect order and symmetry and regularity which characterize all the movements of Nature. Look at the movements of the heavenly bodies. So absolutely orderly is the march of the moon round the earth, and of the earth round the sun, that an eclipse can be foretold to the moment centuries beforehand. And we find perfect order in the extraordinarily minute no less than in the extraordinarily vast. In the tiny laying on of cell to cell which constitutes the growth of all living structures there is a constant following of a design which displays itself at last in the perfect plant or animal. Indeed, the whole modern conception of the universe is of an existence displaying oneness in the power that has produced it and carries it on. There is not a scientific man in all the world who will not insist on that.

¶ A bean was planted in a rich, loamy soil, and when gathered in the autumn its yield, as counted, 'was 1,515 perfectly developed beans from a single stalk. Now, if a single bean produces 1,515 beans, and each bean produces 1,515 more, the sum total of the second year's product would be 2,295,225, equal to 1,195 pounds, or 597 quarts—equal to eighteen and five-eighth bushels. This would be the product of the second year. Now, if we plant this produce and the yield is the same, we have a product of 5,268,058,800,625 beans, equal to 1,371,890 tons, or 42,871,572 bushels. Who made that bean? All the men on earth, with all their machinery and wealth, could not make one bean in six thousand years. They might make a pen-knife, but could they make a knife that would make ten others? Could they make a watch that, if buried in the damp earth, would divide itself into 1,515 watches just like itself and each of these watches produce 1,515 more, and so on to the end of the world? What is this mysterious power that works with such certainty, celerity, uniformity and persistency? 'Law'? What *is* law? and who made it, and who executes it? What law can enforce and execute itself? Beyond all the deep and mysterious operations of the natural world we see the constant guidance of an over-ruling, all-controlling, and omnipotent will.[1]

All different forms of life are gradually being shown to have grown out of one primeval form. Indeed, in the minute amoeba beneath the microscope we can see with our own eyes almost exactly what that form was, And science teachers are not content now, as they used to be, to point out the wonderful similarity between the skeletons of a man and a frog; but they gather the molluscs, too, and the insects of the air, and even the plants themselves, into one great family with mankind. It is even hinted that there is but one substance throughout the universe, and that the difference in quality, in consistency, in weight, in colour, in taste, in smell, may, after all, result only from the different modes in which the atoms are packed together, or from the differences in speed and direction of the motions of the particles which constitute this universal substance. And the marvellous revelations of the spectrum assure us that away in the most distant stars the component substances are arranged in much the same varieties as here. Nay, more, science teaches us that gravitation and magnetism and heat and electricity, and all those modes of physical energy that we are accustomed to talk of as so many different forces, are really so many different fashions in which the one sole force exhibits itself.

Thus science is bringing us to precisely the same position as that which is taken up by Revealed Religion—namely, that the infinite motions which make up this stupendous universe—motions of giant suns through fathomless space, motions of the minutest molecules in the tiniest cell of the animal organism—are all the effect of Will. And this Will is one and the same Will, here, there, and everywhere, both now and through all time. This Will,

[1] W. G. Neville, *Sermons*, 59.

this living, energising Power, is God's, and when we look upon this universe and regard it as the sphere of the causative energy of God, imagination is overwhelmed before the revelation which our understanding has forced upon us. The most powerful telescopes ever constructed reveal, on what we are tempted to call the very outskirts of creation, gleams of dusky light made up of what seem points of luminous matter. Some of these clouds of light are clusters of suns many times larger than the giant sun which sheds light and heat upon the earth. And no man can say that even these bodies are any nearer to the boundaries of creation than we are ourselves. And no man can suggest by what number they exceed the twenty millions of stars which human eyes have never seen. And it is the one God that rules and governs all these incalculable worlds in all their parts, through all the hours and days and years and centuries and aeons. When we allow ourselves for a moment to contemplate this pervading, all-embracing Will, it must, indeed, fill us with awe to reflect that we also stand beside God, mysteriously endowed with the prerogative of will. Minute, truly, does the field of our action appear in contrast. But yet we also are living wills, with the distinct prerogatives of initiative and purpose, able to produce movements by our own spontaneous choice, and therefore, more akin to God the Creator than to the pebbles and the rocks and the mountains, which are only the material that the Supreme Will wields.

Thou who mad'st the mighty clock
Of the great world go;
Mad'st its pendulum swing and rock,
Ceaseless to and fro;
Thou whose will doth push and draw
Every orb in heaven,
Help me move by higher law
In my spirit graven.

Like a planet let me swing—
With intention strong;
In my orbit rushing sing
Jubilant along;
Help me answer in my course
To my seasons due;
Lord of every stayless force,
Make my Willing true.[1]

## The Knowledge of God.

### II.

### *The Witness of Conscience.*

Deut. iv. 39.—'Know therefore this day, and consider in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.'

The previous sermon on this subject treated of the witness of the understanding to the existence of God. This appeal to the reasoning faculty belongs to the sphere of philosophy rather than to that of religion. A man may acknowledge as true all that has been advanced in the previous sermon, and yet he may be neither a man who seeks to live righteously nor a man who knows the deep peace of God. The philosophical conviction of God as the Infinite and Eternal Cause does not of itself make men good; it does not of itself make men lovers of God. And as for the awful sense of the irresistible might of God, that, by itself, is as likely to make men desperadoes as saints; is as likely to fill men's hearts with terror as with religious affection. Is there no other way, then, of discovering God which may supply what the teachings of physical science lack? Yes. Instead of dwelling on the movements of the outward universe, let us turn to certain inward motions of our own spiritual being.

Which of us has not, on some occasion or other, yielded to some great and strong temptation? And what stands out most vividly in our memories about the moment immediately succeeding? Is it the pleasure, the gain, the gratification which we grasped? That pleasure or gain seemed to us immediately before so precious that for its sake we did what we knew to be wrong. And yet it is not the enjoyment that we remember with the keenest memory. No; it is rather a certain poignant and altogether unexpected dissatisfaction which supervened. The gratification was all spoilt by a strange,

[1] George Macdonald.

miserable sense of unworthiness in the presence of which real pleasure could not live for one moment. And this came upon us independent of any reasoning of ours with ourselves, or any voluntary turning on our part to better things. It was not that deliberate reflection showed us how wrong we had been; it was that, altogether without will of ours, reproach was heaped upon us, as though a voice of some holy one were borne in upon our soul.

Or let us turn to a happier experience—when, in spite of severe temptation to act otherwise, we have in some moment of great trial done the deed which we felt to be the purest, the noblest, the worthiest. How was it with us immediately after the die was cast and we had chosen well? Perhaps the choice involved giving up some great delight on which we had set our hearts. Perhaps it involved undertaking some painful labour from which our weak flesh shrank. If so, the time immediately following our firm decision must have been, one would think, a time in which we had a sense of painful blank or of painful burden. But was it really so? On the contrary, there came to us a sweet and wonderful peace of heart which we had by no means counted on. For the moment there was a clear sense of having come into harmony with the best, of living the true life, which was worth more to us by far than the ease or gratification which we had forgone. It was not a sense of merit, or even of unworthiness; it was a sense of peace, as though one whose approval we cared for whispered in our ears, 'My child, you have done well.'

> The smiling Conscience in a sleeping breast,
> Has only peace, has only rest;
> The music and the mirth of kings
> Are all but very discords when she sings;
> Then close thine eyes and rest secure,
> No sleep so sweet as thine, no rest so sure.[1]

But the sense that we are rebuked when we have done ill, and are approved of when we have done well, does not exhaust the order of experiences to which we are now referring. That order of experiences has to do not only with the moments following good or evil conduct, it has to do also with those prior moments in which temptations to evil or opportunities for good present themselves. We all have our seasons of urgent and terrible temptation. At certain moments of our lives wrong acts suggest themselves, and somehow seem to have so much excuse—to be so little wrong and so very pleasant, or so convenient, or so much the easiest way out of a difficulty—that the inclination to commit them comes over all of us with overwhelming force. But when a man is on the very point of yielding, there will suddenly come to him an urgent demand that he shall not act so. It is as though the hand of a friend were laid on his arm to restrain him, or as though some kind guardian spoke in his ear a grave word of warning. And happy is the man who is turned from his purpose by this counsellor who speaks to his spirit out of the unseen.

Yet again, sometimes it is rather a sudden opportunity of good that comes to a man than a solicitation to positive evil. It may be that flood or fire presents him with the chance of saving life. It may be that the opportunity arises of administering to another some word of advice, reproof, or consolation. In the one case the love of his own life dissuades him powerfully from the deed; in the other case the shrinkings of diffidence disincline him to throw in the saving word. And he would let the opportunity slip, were it not that out of the air, as it were, by no volition of his own, there comes a command, which will leave him no peace, to turn him to the rescue or to speak the word of enlightenment or counsel. Thus, within the experience of every one of us there is this notable quadruple phenomenon: that when we have the opportunity of doing that which is good, and when we have the temptation to do that which is evil, and when we have done the deed which it was right to do, and when we have done the deed which it was wrong to do—in each and all of these four cases there comes to us a voice, as it were, of exhortation or warning, of approval or rebuke, which is not our own and which yet asserts over us an authority that we are not able to gainsay. It is a 'Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness.'

[1] Quarles.

What account are we to give of this silent voice, this command, this prohibition, this speechless 'Well-done' or 'Shame on you,' which drops on us like sunshine or rain out of the heavens? Men call it conscience. And what is conscience but the voice of God speaking to the soul of man? These impressions—vivid, often sudden, powerful, authoritative, have in them all the marks that belong to the communication of thought or feeling from one mind to another. They interrupt the sequence of man's own thought or feeling. They break in upon him. The most natural explanation is that they are really direct communications from some Mind that reads our life as an open book, and from whom we cannot flee away. If there were no other witness of God to the soul of man save this, it would suffice to assure him of the perpetual presence of an unseen, penetrating Spirit in mysterious fellowship with his own.

¶ The child who refuses to pollute its little lips with a lie and the archangel who refuses with indignation to rebel in the armies of heaven against the Most High act alike in obedience to a law which pervades all intelligent beings. This law is the Moral Sense; a rule co-extensive and co-eval with mind. It derives its existence from the eternal character of the Deity, and seems of itself to imply and therefore to prove His Existence. Whence comes this strong universal feeling that approves or abhors actions? Manifestly not from *matter,* but from a *Mind* of which it is the essence. That mind is God.[1]

## The Knowledge of God.

### III.

### *The Witness of the Spirit.*

Deut. iv. 39.—'Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.'

In the two preceding sermons we have dealt with the testimony which the understanding and the conscience, respectively, bear to the existence of God. The object of the present sermon is to show how the existence and goodness of God are revealed to us through the medium of the Spirit.

What is meant by 'the medium of the Spirit' in this connection? Who of us has not experienced occasions when we were the victims of worry, vexation, gloom and fretfulness? Everything seemed to go wrong with us. We were out of temper with ourselves and everybody else. The whole world seemed ajar, and life hardly worth living. But did this mood last with us for always? No. Quite suddenly, without there being anything in our thoughts to account for a change, a new sense awakened in our spirit. The load of care, which a moment before seemed intolerable, slipped off our heart, and a feeling of peace and contentment swiftly and surely stole into our soul. The discord was solved, and life which just previously had seemed so jarring became once more full of harmony. It was as if a voice spoke in our ear, and said, 'Behold I am with you, I care for you, and will help you. All is well.' We felt that we were not alone. A presence which was all love and peace and strength had found us out. This new-found Presence, this Power of peace and strength by which we were suddenly sustained, this Voice that seemed to pierce our hardness and resentment and to thrill our inmost being, what was it but the voice of our Heavenly Father speaking to us, penetrating us with His presence, and shedding around us an influence of peace and strength? This is not a matter which, like the evidences of Divine Will in the outward world, appeals to our understanding. It appeals to our emotions, it is an experience of our feelings to which practically all of us can testify from personal observation. And it is an experience which belongs to the very centre and essence of religion. The prophets themselves have been prophets only in proportion as God penetrated their souls in this way, and they have faithfully declared to the people that which they have heard and known.

What is so remarkable about these experiences is that, like those of conscience, they often strike counter to the whole current of one's thoughts at the moment. There is nothing that we know of to lead up to them; so that we cannot help thinking that some

[1] Emerson.

other force than that of our own minds has been brought to bear upon us. And what more simple or natural explanation of such a phenomenon can we give than to say that it is the mind of God which has brought itself to bear upon our own minds, and thus suddenly changed the current of our reflections?

It was the voice of God, that spake
In silence to thy silent heart;
And bade each holier thought awake,
And every dream of earth depart.

But if God thus communicates Himself to our intellects and our emotions in these various ways, let us inquire whether it is not possible for us to communicate our thoughts to Him. Can we speak to God? And if we do, will He answer? It may be urged that there is no necessity for us to speak to God, for if He is wise and good and His almighty power works for righteousness, anything we say to Him can serve no useful purpose, since He does not need our advice and will certainly not give way to our interference. Such an argument loses sight of the fact that God who, as we have seen, is constantly sustaining the fallen, soothing the ruffled, consoling and calming those in sorrow and pain, is the Friend of man. In our relations with our friends we never ask ourselves what benefit we shall get out of our intercourse with them. We seek that intercourse for its own sake. The converse of friend and friend is the purest of all the delights of mankind. And prayer is not so much a petition that a subject would offer to a king or a slave to his master as the intercourse of friend with friend. It is this primarily. But, in the second place, it is also an answer. Prayer is a means by which we, so to speak, set the Divine Power in motion. Is it strange that it should be given to us to employ such means? Not at all. We employ it in other spheres. All human labour is nothing else than so altering the condition of tangible things as to set the Divine Power in motion in ways desired by us. The farmer desires a goodly crop, and he manures, ploughs and sows accordingly. He thus sets the forces which belong to God at work on the seeds, till they shoot and grow and bring forth the golden harvest. Those seeds would have brought forth no increase if the farmer had left them untouched. He has voluntarily subjected them to the life-giving forces of God, and those forces have been freely given in response to what may be called the 'prayer' of his labour.

¶ It is as when the vessel nearing land flings its rope and finds that it holds. In prayer we know ourselves in contact with a higher realm of things, and our rope holds. Our answer is the thing we want, the best thing there is. Not words; for what are they? Not words, but what is so much better—the inflowing of peace, a sense of security, the feeling of a near Presence, often an ineffable happiness. Are there better things in this or any world than these? Is there any heaven surpassing in its sheer blessedness that which John Masefield in 'The Everlasting Mercy' has described as flashing into a humble, seeking soul—

I knew that Christ had given me birth
To brother all the souls on earth,
And every bird and every beast
Should have the crumbs broke at the feast!

Prayer is the soul's contact with the realm to which it belongs. Throw your cable across to it and you find that it holds. Throw your bridge across to it, and the treasures, the society, of that realm will begin to pour in.[1]

It is sometimes asserted that prayer is incompatible with what is known as 'the Reign of Law.' Let us examine this objection. Our belief in the Reign of Law is the grandest of all beliefs which modern science has established. It is the recognition of the sublime fact that order prevails throughout the universe. To believe in the Reign of Law means that we believe that the forces which act through the earth and the starry heavens always act in like manner, and that under the like set of conditions the like results will always follow. This is only another way of saying that God's modes of action do not shift and change; that His methods of work are so perfect as never to need altering. That being so, it would be folly to expect that He would

[1] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-Day*, 252.

alter them in particular cases because we entreat Him to do so. If that were the case, awful indeed would be the responsibility of any man who offered up any such entreaties. He would be setting up his wisdom against God's, seeking to break the order that springs forth from the Divine Will. All physical phenomena depend on purely physical conditions. Now prayer, which is a spiritual act, cannot, if there be such a thing as a Reign of Law, exert any effect upon physical conditions. But the world in which we live is not physical alone. It is spiritual also. And the spiritual side of it touches our life even more nearly than the physical. And prayer, being a spiritual force, may well work wonderful effects in the spiritual sphere. The Reign of Law, in all probability, obtains in matters spiritual as well as in matters physical. But to expect an answer to prayer would not involve any interference with the Reign of Law in the spiritual world, because prayer is itself one of the laws of the spiritual world. The doubts and confusions which prevail as to what prayer can or cannot accomplish arise from the habit into which people fall of confounding the spiritual world with the physical world, and expecting results in the one sphere to flow from the exercise of forces in the other sphere. In the physical world, for instance, God's law is that the nearer a needle is brought to the magnet the more powerfully does the magnet attract it; while in the spiritual world God's law is that the more earnestly the soul reaches up to God in prayer, the more surely does God impart His strength to that soul. But it would be as foolish to expect to attract the needle by prayer as to attempt by the magnet to win the strength of God to the soul. Thus the prayer of exceeding sorrow brings God's answer of comfort. The prayer of penitence brings the sweet sense of forgiveness. The prayer in temptation brings the strength to repel the evil. And not one of these phenomena is a breach of the Reign of Law. Rather are they so many beautiful examples of it. So far from being averse to prayer, the Reign of Law is a powerful reason for its cultivation. For if this sublime conception teaches us that it is vain to pray for things which result from physical causes, it teaches us likewise that it is vain to look for a saintly character or for the possession of spiritual peace and strength from any other antecedents than their proper and natural cause. And that is the habit of Prayer to God.

But it is a narrow interpretation of the function of prayer to confine it to the approach of the soul to God in petition and supplication. God is our Friend, and that would be poor friendship in which the intercourse was confined to asking on the one side, and granting on the other. We love to commune with our friend. In the intervals of leisure we gladly seek him out and talk with him. Our labour is sweetened if we can exchange a word with him now and again amid our toil. Converse with him is our delight, though it may lead to nothing beyond. And so it is in man's friendship with God. We love to commune with Him. Waking to a new day, or laying ourselves down to sleep at night, it is delightful to turn our hearts to Him, and feel His sustaining power. In the midst of our day's work it is sweet to realize that His presence is with us, strengthening our hands for duty. Thanksgiving, confession, simple communion of spirit with spirit—these are as much part of the wonderful inward life of prayer as the most earnest supplications. And the fact that they are possible, that they are constant, daily experiences of numberless human beings, furnishes quite as powerful a testimony to the existence and the goodness of an unseen Power as the fact that our petitions and supplications for spiritual help and blessing call down from heaven, by an immutable law of the Spirit, their immediate and appropriate answer.

## The Covenant Relationship.

Deut. v. 2.—'The Lord our God made a covenant with us.'

'THE Lord our God made a covenant with us'—that is not only the heart of the Decalogue, it is also the very heart of religion. Religion begins with the consciousness that we are brought into relationship with God, and stand to Him in terms of love and grace. So the idea

of covenant is woven into the complete fabric of the Bible. The Bible is the record of Divine covenant. This great figure has been too often stated merely forensically, as a legal contract. Because of this it has repelled men. But it is an eternal truth nevertheless; and we must in some way restate it spiritually to ourselves before religion has its birth in us. The prophets spoke of the covenant not as a formal act, like a legal document drawn up on a special occasion. To them it was a figure of speech by which they expressed the spiritual history of man, and explained the spiritual position of Israel. What other word will better express the fact that God did enter into human history, and that men were brought near to God and walked with Him in humility and truth? But, whether we use the word or not, the religious life is a phantom unless there be a reality behind this idea of covenant. Fellowship with God implies the consciousness of a relationship of love and favour between God and man. Call it covenant, call it Fatherhood and sonship, call it the marriage of Christ and His Church (and these are all Biblical images), they are but names, earthly figures to express the spiritual reality of fellowship.

1. What did this covenant-relationship do for Israel? Without it there would have been no Israel. The assurance of a covenant with God brought strength to the national life. 'The people that know their God shall be strong and do exploits.' This assurance made them a nation, welded them into one, and carried them victoriously over difficulties. In the field of battle it nerved the arm and stayed the heart. Their leaders were only instruments in the hand of their God to work out His loving purpose to them. Gideon or any other might be that instrument; but it was 'the sword of the Lord.' Every event was God-appointed, and so was meant for education. Even in defeat and humiliation the consciousness of a national vocation kept them from despair. In the dread furnace of the Exile, when they were denationalized, torn from their country, scattered among the heathen, their faith saved them, and the nation never died.

2. Of the reality of fellowship with God every religious man is assured. Religion implies just such a relationship of love and grace on the part of God. How such a consciousness brings strength and comfort to a human heart, let everyone who knows the power of salvation attest! Even in debased and vicious forms it can be seen to be powerful, making a man strong in a blatant land. It is seen in its debased form in such a man as Napoleon, with his faith in his own star, feeling himself to be the man of destiny. That faith—such as it was—carried him far. Every man of strong character has this faith in some form or other, that he is separated out somehow to do something or be something. When the faith is truly *religious,* and not superstitious, it drives a life with resistless energy in lines that, unlike Napoleon's, bless the world. It gave the Church, in her days of persecution, power to suffer and to wait. It was the comfort of the Church of the first centuries. It was the strength of the Scottish Covenanters. Not the written document, the 'Solemn League and Covenant,' but the inward assurance that they were serving God, and spilling their blood worthily, nerved them to resistance. Is there any motive in the whole of life calculated to inspire to noble action like this—that the Lord our God has made a covenant with us?

3. Is there anything so dreary as the life that has no outlook, no thrill of spiritual power, no vision of the beauty and grace and love of the Eternal? If you dislike the word 'covenant,' and think it too legal, too commercial a figure to express such a great reality, leave the word: what about the great fact, or great faith, for which the word only feebly stands? What about this fellowship of God which men of all ages have experienced and felt so sweet? Is the heaven now brass above us, and the earth a sodden mass, and life a poor and pitiful gift? Must we look back wistfully but hopelessly to the time when men could stay their heart-hunger by the thought that God remembered men and visited them? Is there no lot possible for us except that of aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world?

Nay, the presence of Christ in our sinful world is an eternal protest against such a hopeless creed. Who can see the beauty of His holiness, who can see Him full of grace and truth, and behold His glory, without feeling that He is well called Immanuel, God with us and God for us? He is the way of access, the Mediator of the new covenant; and the sign of the covenant is blood; the very blood of His love. Lift up your face, even with stain of tears, and believe. Lift up your heart and accept the pledge of the Father's love. And let the inspiring power of the faith that the Lord your God has made an everlasting covenant with you fill your life.

¶ The Son of God, at once above our life and in our life, morally divine and circumstantially human, mediates for us between the self so hard to escape, and the Infinite so hopeless to reach; and draws us out of our mournful darkness without losing us in excess of light. He opens to us the moral and spiritual mysteries of our existence, appealing to a consciousness in us that was asleep before. And though He leaves whole worlds of thought approachable only by silent wonder, yet His own walk of heavenly communion, His words of grace and works of power, His strife of divine sorrow, His cross of self-sacrifice, His reappearance behind the veil of life eternal, fix on Him such holy trust and love that, where we are denied the assurance of knowledge, we attain the repose of faith.[1]

O Christ our Light, Whom even in darkness we
(So we look up) discern and gaze upon,
O Christ, Thou loveliest Light that ever
shone,
Thou Light of Light, Fount of all lights that be,
Grant us clear vision of Thy Light to see,
Tho' other lights elude us, or begone
Into the secret of oblivion,
Or gleam in places higher than man's degree.
Who looks on Thee looks full on his desire,
Who looks on Thee looks full on Very Love:
Looking, he answers well, 'What lack I
yet?'
His heat and cold wait not on earthly fire,
His wealth is not of earth to lose or get;
Earth reels, but he has stored his store
above.[1]

[1] *Life and Letters of James Martineau*, i. 286.

## Mediation.

**Deut. v. 5. 'I stood between the Lord and you at that time.'**

1. THERE are many examples of the practice of mediation in the Old Testament. They may be conveniently grouped in three divisions.

(1) First, there is mediation in the general form of *intercession*. One of the grandest examples is the intercession of Abraham on behalf of the Cities of the Plain. The inhabitants of these cities were exceedingly wicked, so wicked that God thought it right to destroy them all. The story ran that this dread decision was revealed by God to Abraham. Abraham is represented as pleading with God for the deliverance of Sodom and Gomorrah should even a few righteous men be found within their walls.

Now the main feature of this impressive incident is that Abraham is permitted to know of the impending judgment on the Cities of the Plain expressly because of his moral excellence, and clearly in order that he should exercise that mediation for which his excellence qualified him. For the writer of this story never supposed that the mediation of Abraham took God by surprise. On the contrary the opportunity is provided him. Then comes the Divine forbearance and the earnest pressure of the mediator, as six times over he pleads that the cities may be saved for the sake of the righteous few, until he has reduced the number lower and lower to the concession that the places shall be spared for the sake of ten.

(2) There is also the mediation of the *covenant* between God and Israel. Israel was to be 'a peculiar treasure' to God above all peoples, 'a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.' But the covenant was effected through the mediation of Moses. He was doubly constituted as mediator, both by the Divine appointment and by the people's desire. The messages from heaven were given to Moses and through him communicated to Israel.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

'These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.' And on the other hand the people said, 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' So 'the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.'

(3) Thirdly, there is the mediation of the *priesthood*. The entire Levitical system was one continuous mediation. The priesthood occupied a necessary place in the devotional life of the chosen people. By it alone could certain functions be discharged. No layman in Israel was ever permitted to enter the Holy Place. There in the inner sanctuary which represented God's dwelling, God's immediate presence, stood no one but the High Priest. Upon his jewelled breastplate were inscribed the names of the Twelve Tribes. He bore the people on his heart to God. He stood there as their Divinely constituted representative achieving for them on the Day of Atonement that renewed reconciliation with God which it was his privilege alone to secure. Mediation, then, is the mark of Israel's worship, its characteristic through and through.

2. What are the objections to meditation?

(1) The objection is raised that if mediation were true, the people for whom it was offered might have gone about their business, leaving the whole issue to their mediator. This is a curious misconception. Mediation is no substitute for personal effort. Let the offender exert all the efforts of which he is capable. Still, when he has done all this, may there not yet be room and need to supplement his efforts? And if this is the case even when he has done his best, is it not still more the case when his best is precisely what he has not done? Is not the general difficulty with the offender how to induce him to make that supreme exertion? Is it not true that the mediation of others between the offender and God, their Godward prayers and efforts in his behalf continually, are the very means whereby his personal efforts begin? Mediation is certainly not the same thing as personal effort, nor can it ever be a mere substitute for this. But does it follow that because mediation cannot do everything therefore it is of no use? Surely this objection to the principle has not really been thought out. It would lead to such strange results in many things—results which no religious mind could possibly accept.

(2) It has been said that mediation was founded on an imperfect idea of God. The Old Testament writers knew quite well that God was ever ready to hear the sinners who repented. They knew quite well that if Job pleaded for his children God put it into his heart to plead. They knew quite well that God was as deeply concerned about the state of Israel as Nehemiah could be. They never imagined that the wonderful pleading of Abraham for the sinful cities could be interpreted as if Abraham were more merciful than God. It was no secret to a Jew that if God put that grace of intercession into His creature's mind, the gift had not exhausted the generosity of the Giver of the grace.

Thus Israel recognized the dignity and the value of intercession. It found a real place in religion for the principle of mediation.

(3) There are some to whom the idea of mediation seems irreconcilable with the fact of personal responsibility. Now personal responsibility is indeed a fact impossible to be gainsaid. Ezekiel formulated it for all ages when he declared that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father or the father the iniquity of the son; that the soul that sins is the soul that shall die, or bear the punishment of its own sin. But, true as all this is, surely it is after all only one aspect of the truth. There is no such thing as vicarious punishment. That is true. Nevertheless there is such a thing as vicarious suffering. If there is a personal responsibility there is a social responsibility also. And Israel realized the social truth as well as the individual.

There are two ways in which it is possible to regard the sin of other people. One is to say that it is entirely their own concern. Their sin is between themselves and their Maker. It is their business, for they have done it. It is not ours. And we may proceed to support our view with the Scriptural quotation that every man must bear his own burden.

A little reflection, however, may lead us to

perceive that, however true this is, there is another side as well; and that if one scripture affirms our individual responsibility, there is another which enjoins the duty of bearing one another's burdens. If each soul lived in a separate planet by itself then the theory of moral insularity might be sufficient for the circumstances. But we are not isolated units, and cannot be explained in that way. We are members of a family, of a nation, of a race. And therefore it is morally impossible not to be concerned about other people's transgressions.

¶ Nature appears to be far more bent on making us *social* beings than on making us rigidly just. It forces on us co-operation as a condition of thriving; and continued co-operation begets sympathy; and thus Nature is not quite so hostile to morality as Huxley supposed it to be. . . . For one soul to save another by sucking the poison out of its wounds appeared to Deistical religion impossible, if not immoral. It could not understand that deep and noble instinct of self-sacrifice which makes some men willing to go to hell for the sake of others; and so it knew not the crowning glory of our nature. In Charles Kingsley's well-known story, 'Two Years Ago', the saintly heroine is represented as so pierced with sorrow and compassion for her thieving mother that she came to wish that she herself might have been the criminal, in order that her mother might be free from guilt and vileness. The state of mind thus exhibited, though unintelligible to conventional and prudential Deism, is in full harmony with the grandest Christianity. In it we discern sympathy *in excelsis*, a veritable reflection of the cross of Calvary, a reproduction of that fathomless pity which caused Christ to identify Himself with struggling and erring humanity in such a penetrating and marvellous way that its sins became a real element of his consciousness, and, to use the daring language of St. Paul, 'He was made sin for us.'[1]

[1] A. H. Craufurd, *Recollections of James Martineau*, 194.

## The Ten Commandments.

Deut. v. 6.—'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'

Great codes of law are very ancient. At the end of the last century there was discovered by the French at Susa a most interesting stone, dated and inscribed in the cuneiform script. Except where it has been deliberately defaced it is legible and intelligible. It is a code of laws which was written and inscribed some 2,300 years B.C. by a great king, who is perhaps the same as is mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis under the name of Amraphel. He is a certain historical character, and we know a good deal about him. We know how, hundreds of years before Moses, in the days of Abraham, he extended his empire from the mouths of the Euphrates and Tigris right across Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine to the Mediterranean Sea. Now his code of law is an extraordinarily elaborate one, and very like the Hebrew code in many points. No doubt the Hebrews felt its influence, because it permeated the whole of the East. This code, then, which was still copied and studied two thousand years afterwards, and influenced vastly the whole of the East, exhibits a very high level of social and legal morality. It goes into great detail; we are told, for example, the wages of all the different kinds of workmen five thousand years ago.

But if we compare it with the Jewish code it lacks a centre. What distinguishes the Jewish code—or amalgamation of codes—as we get it in the Pentateuch is that it has a centre in these ten short commandments, these sharp, stern prohibitions. The Ten Commandments are given us in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, and, in slightly different form, in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy: and if we were able to get at the original form, the form in which they were laid up in the sacred Ark, it is probable that we should find that they were all quite short prohibitions: 'Thou shalt have none other God but me'; 'Thou shalt not make any graven image'; 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God

in vain'; 'Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy'; 'Thou shalt honour thy father and mother'; 'Thou shalt do no murder'; 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'; 'Thou shalt not steal'; 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour'; 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.' These short, sharp sentences are the fences of the garden of God.

Let us take the Ten Commandments as they stand and see what was their original meaning.

1. 'Thou shalt have none other gods before me': that is 'in my presence' or 'beside me.' That does not exactly declare that there exists no other god than Jehovah, the God of Israel—though Israel was to learn that higher truth in due course. All that it says is that their worship of Jehovah, is to be exclusive: 'For you there is to be none other God in My presence.' The worship of Israel is to be exclusive; it is to take no account of any other god. And the same principle is carried out in the second commandment.

2. 'Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image': that is, they were not to worship God by the aid of images of various kinds, as the Egyptians worshipped their deities. For it was not far from worshipping God by the aid of an image to worshipping the image itself. Many times, in their after history, this law was broken (*see* Ex. xxxii. 1-6; 1 Kings xii. 26-33). And the very Temple, with its ordinances of external worship, usurped subsequently the rights of Him to whom the service was nominally rendered. Hence our Lord's great declaration to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 23, 24), a declaration which even His followers have so often forgotten. For there has been much perilous tampering with the command against worshipping by the aid of the likeness of the Divine; indeed, all sensuous symbolism verges towards its violation.

3. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain': in other words, 'Thou shalt not forswear thyself' (Mt. v. 33). For to take an oath in God's name, and break it, was not only a sin against man, but an insult to the God whose name was thus made light of. And all flippancy with regard to sacred things, as well as all essential untruth, is really covered and condemned by this prohibition.

4. 'Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy.' This is properly the central command. For, while the first three point towards our duty to God, and the last six towards our duty to our fellow-men, the fourth looks both ways, and concerns itself with the claims of even the cattle of the earth. Our duty to ourselves is also comprised in it; for we are to give rest to our own bodies and minds, as well as to sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants, and all things that serve our will—and this, not merely for the sake of rest, but that there may be thus the fuller opportunity for seeking and cherishing fellowship with God. Christianity has indeed taught us that a rigidly literal observance is not demanded of those who have entered into the mind of God; but, for this very reason, a substantial, sympathetic, and therefore true observance of the Sabbath law is looked for from Christians.

This fourth commandment holds within itself three laws: there is the law of the Sabbath, the law of abstinence from work; there is the law of work for all the other days, 'Six days shalt thou labour,' which is the root of the Jewish reverence for labour and contempt for idleness; thirdly, there is the law of fellowship, the equal regard for the manservant and the maidservant and even the cattle. Such is the comprehensive scope of the fourth commandment.

5. Then follows the fifth of the great distinctive precepts—alone among the Ten Commandments in being positive and not negative—which is the root of all the deep Jewish reverence for the home: 'Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God commanded thee; that thy days may be long, and that it may go well with thee, upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.' Reverence for parents lies deep in the life of the home. The Jews had a very severe view of parental discipline: there is no question about

that. Nevertheless, or for that very reason, there was no nation among whom the sense of the sacredness of the home was so deeply developed and in such a religious spirit. The commandment tells them that therein was to lie the continuity and the strength of their nation. In their sense of the sacredness of marriage, and their love of family life, and in their insistence on the stern discipline of the home—in these things was their strength.

6. 'Thou shalt do no murder.' One of the earliest temptations of youth is passionate wrath. And, at least in a comparatively unorganized state of society, such wrath may pass into murder—as in the case of Cain. This command sets forth the inviolable sanctity of human life, as a gift from God, and to be reclaimed only by God. A stern interdict, therefore, is here laid on all rash acts, of passion or of carelessness, and still more of deliberate malice, that may interfere with the rights of life. (Of course, the judicial taking away of life is not so much as referred to, being indeed afterwards solemnly enjoined: see, *e.g.*, Ex. xxi. 12.) In further enforcement of the spirit of this law, our Lord has warned us that even the passionate impulse itself comes under the same condemnation (Matt. v. 21, 22).

7. 'Neither shalt thou commit adultery.' Sacred as life may be, yet honour and virtue are more sacred still; and those who violate the sanctities of the relationship that is meant to be man's best, and purest, and most enduring human joy, are of all evil-doers the most infamous, and turn God's Eden into a blasted desert.

This command needs to be interpreted very largely, for it is exceeding broad. Whatever is not in agreement with a sole supreme union between one and one, as instituted first by God (Gen. ii. 24), and re-emphasized by Christ (Matt. xix. 4-6), is virtually at variance with the law. And every seeming union which is only of the outward life, and not of the inmost soul, such as that which is only for comfort, or for convenience, or, worst of all, for gain, is a violation of the sanctity of human nature and of the law of God.

8. 'Neither shalt thou steal.' As seen in the character of Jacob, underhand dealings were very congenial to the Jewish temperament. What Ecclesiasticus called 'the sin that sticks close between buying and selling' was very much in their disposition. This commandment does not express anything like the full principle of morality; but it is a stern, sharp prohibition against tampering with other people's property. It was impressed upon the Jews by their prophets, especially in that sense in which it involves the recognition of the principle of justice and the rights of the defenceless, the poor and the weak.

9. 'Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.' The Jews were a litigious people, and perjury very probably came as natural to them in law cases as, alas! after all these centuries of moral discipline in this so-called Christian country, it appears to come to us. Therefore the need for this sharp word of prohibition.

10. 'Neither shalt thou covet.' While the fifth command deals virtually with deeds and motives alike, and is positive in its bearing, the remaining five are negative, and their direct significance is distributed between actions, words, and desires. This last aims at the heart, and effectually redeems the decalogue from the charge of a hard externalism. It interdicts even the stray thought that is not loyal to the rights of other men.

## Remember.

Deut. v. 15.—'Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt.'

'REMEMBER that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt.' That was a part of their history which they were apt to forget.

By the time this book was circulated, the Hebrews had become a rich and prosperous people. The days of wandering in the wilderness were over. They no longer dwelt in tents: they dwelt in houses, as we should say, of stone and lime. They had become a settled people, with all the securities and amenities of an established community. More than

that, they were now one of the nations of the earth. As a nation, too, they were in relation with the great nations of the world. There was a good deal of coming and going, for instance, between them and Egypt, between them and Assyria.

1. Why, then, should a book of laws circulated about this time lay such stress upon that one word 'Remember'? And why should God appeal to the Hebrews of that time to remember particularly that they had once been servants in the land of Egypt? Was it that God wished merely to trouble them in the midst of their prosperity? Was it that God took delight in reminding them that their fathers had been poor, and had been the servants of others? We shall get the answer if we consider for a moment this other question—which is just the question as it would present itself to the mind of God—What were the dangers, the temptations, to which the people of God were particularly exposed just because they were now prosperous and apparently secure?

We only need to put the question to be able to answer it. For human nature is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. In these matters there is neither Jew nor Gentile. The danger or temptation of all prosperity or security is that we begin to suppose that our security is in our circumstances, in the things we have gathered round us, and to forget that, beneath the surface, our one security is in God.

2. Now it is for ourselves to say whether—and for the same reason—this is not a word which needs to sound in our ears to-day. Is there not a very great temptation that we spurn the very means by which we have won whatever honourable security and prosperity we have? Is there not the insidious, subtle temptation of pride, of a secret denial that it is to God that we owe things—the secret idea creeping into our minds that we must always have been wonderful people to have become what we have become, that our own right hand has won us these things? Well, the result of such a secret disloyalty to God is just that we lose hold of God, we put God out of our lives, we come to be without God. That is not the penalty which the writer in Deuteronomy threatens. He always declares that if in the midst of our prosperity we forget God, we shall begin to lose our very prosperity, all sorts of trouble will begin to gather about us, until we shall be overthrown. And all that is probably as true to-day as it ever was. But that is not how *we* should put it. We should rather say that if we *will* forget God in our prosperity, then the penalty is we shall lose from our souls that humility, that tenderness, that gratitude, that simplicity, that supplication, which are the five fingers of the hand by which we can, any of us, take hold of the hand of God.

This then, we may believe, was the aim of the Spirit of God in this book—to interrupt that hardening and secularizing process which is apt to begin in a human soul, or in a people, when the days of their poverty, or hardship or worldly insecurity are passed, and they seem to themselves to be beyond the reach of evil chance. God wanted to keep His place in that heart of theirs, from which the world in all sorts of ways was trying to banish Him. And for their own sakes He wanted them not to lose the simplicity and the gentleness, the kind of natural and regular trust and supplication which we all have in our days of difficulty.

¶ I asked him [St. Francis] once how it was that we are so ready to have recourse to God when the thorn of affliction pierces us, and so eager in asking for deliverance from sickness, calumny, famine, and such like misfortunes. 'It is,' he said, 'our weakness which thus cries out for help, and it is a proof of the infirmity which encompasses us; for as the best and firmest fish feed in the salt waters of the open sea, those which are caught in fresh water being less pleasing to the taste, so the most generous natures find their element in crosses and afflictions, while meaner spirits are only happy in prosperity.

'Moreover,' he continued, 'it is much easier to love God perfectly in adversity than in prosperity. For tribulation having nothing in itself that is lovable, save that it is God's gift, it is much easier to go by it straight to the will of God, and to unite ourselves to His good

pleasure. Easier, I say, than by prosperity, which has attractions of its own that captivate our senses, and, like Dalila, lull them to sleep, working in us a subtle change, so that we begin insensibly to love for its own sake the prosperity which God sends us, instead of bestowing all our grateful love on God Who sends it, and to whom all thanks and praise are due!'[1]

3. But now let us see more particularly the very qualities which the Lord their God wished them to retain, and not to lose. God asked them to 'remember' that they were once servants in Egypt, so that their own hearts might remain soft. But we must all of us take care that we aim at something more than merely a soft heart. The aim and purpose of every religious exercise is not merely that our heart shall become tender, but that it shall in its tenderness go out in certain ways, in certain deeds, in a certain active energy. There is a real danger that we allow our best feelings, when they have been provoked in some way, to evaporate, to die down again without having had any influence upon our will or general disposition. If we consider the passages in which God summons these Hebrews to remember that they themselves were once servants, were once poor and in straits, we shall see that His purpose was not simply that their hearts might become soft; but that, becoming soft, they might allow their hearts to lead them into various kinds of generosity, first towards God, and then towards their fellowmen.

(1) Take the text itself. The whole passage is, 'Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy as the Lord thy God commanded thee. . . . Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm.' That is to say, remember those past days now. Remember them with this result. See that, in the midst of your more complicated life to-day, you honour that day by the public recognition of God. See that the things of God have their definite place in all your scheme of living.

[1] *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, 141.

(2) The next time the words of the text occur is in chapter xv.: 'If thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou lettest him go free from thee, thou shalt not let him go empty: thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy threshing-floor, and out of thy wine-press as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.' That is to say, the tenderness which your recollection of your own early difficulties ought to bring over you, should lead you to generous acts, and a hearty hospitable behaviour towards all those who are beginning to get out of their difficulties as you have got out of yours. As the passage goes on to say: 'It must not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free.'

(3) Next time the words occur is in chapter xvi. 'Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.' That is to say, recall those old days, and see that in your present days you never lose that simple way of living and thinking which was your way of life then. See that now as then *you can do without things.*

(4) The next occurrence is in chapter xxiv., where we read: 'Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of the stranger, nor the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge: but thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.' That is to say, see that you never in your prosperity forget the case of the poor and of the obscure; those who are not able to fight for their rights. Remember that you yourself were once poor, and keep your heart open to their need. See that the law of the land does not bear too heavily upon them. And even if you should have a legal right to a widow's last penny, don't take it.

(5) The final occurrence is later in that same

twenty-fourth chapter, and is in these words: 'When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it after thee: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt.' That is to say, take care in the days of your prosperity that you never become mean. See that you never lose your free and open hand.

And so God did not ask His people to 'remember that they had once been servants' in order merely to humiliate them or to bring them down from their high-mindedness. He asked them never to forget those early, hard, simple, God-fearing days, but to recall them, to recall them until their hearts became soft and tender and simple; and then in the power of such a devout and thankful mood to live their lives in a loving, simple, generous, sympathetic, humble, open-handed way.

¶ I spent Saturday evening glancing afresh over the pages of *Down in Water Street.* What a record it is! Mr. Sam Hadley deserves to be ranked among the greatest philanthropists of our time. During the last years of his life he was courted and admired in the most prodigal fashion. If ever a man was tempted to forget that he had been a bondman in the land of Egypt, it was he. But to the very last he kept his eye on the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged. He remembered the depths of degradation from which he had himself been rescued. He kept constantly in mind that terrible night in which, like the prodigal, he came to himself. It was on April 23, 1882, in his lonely prison cell that he had sought and found the Saviour. And, from that day to the close of his useful and eventful life, he always made a pilgrimage to that cell on the twenty-third of April, and kneeled again on the very spot on which he had first found mercy.[1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Other Side of the Hill,* 100.

## Present-Day Duty.

Deut. vi. 1.—'Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it.'

It is a charge sometimes foolishly and inconsiderately brought against Christianity that it tends to nourish other-worldliness; that it weakens the bonds of allegiance to immediate duty, to present-day life; that where it gains regal influence it detaches from the citizenship of earth, and throws men's aspirations and imaginings into vague, remote, and unprofitable spheres. We recognize the caricature which is involved in such descriptions. All caricature must be at least recognizable likeness, in virtue of which it is caricature. But it is not too much to say that any such charge shows an utter misapprehension of the spirit and scope and method and meaning of the Kingdom of God. It is, surely, no disparagement of Christianity that it has 'brought life and immortality to light,' that it has given to man the relief for which he longed, and longed in vain. It is no reproach, surely, to Christianity that it has lifted the veil toward which the wistful eyes of generations had looked with fruitless longing, and that it has answered the all but despairing inquiry which the human heart so long had made. It is true that Christianity reveals to us another world, eternal life, a sphere of things above and beyond the present and the immediate; but it links the life that now is with that which is to come, and it lays the foundations of the future in the present. The principles of the life eternal are a present and immediate possession and experience, and all citizenship of the other world has its recruiting, its preparation, and its discipline in the citizenship of the world around us.

Here and now are to be learned the things which hereafter will disclose their consummation, their full and ultimate meaning. It is in the heritage of our present and earthly existence that a revelation of the great principles of religion is made to us, its privileges set before us, and its duties laid upon us. We proceed to the business and citizenship of our

earthly life under the hope and under the benediction of our eternal salvation.

1. The people of Israel were on the threshold of a new stage of their life. They were passing out of pupilage into their inheritance—out of a state of enslavement followed by a period of extemporized and obviously incomplete existence. They were passing out of it all, and were about to enter upon the full estate of national existence; and, on the threshold of that life, almost within sight of the hill of their inheritance, the great principles of life, duty, religion, were laid down, and were so laid down that one may say of them fearlessly that they are not for an age but for all time. It does not require much skill to separate here and there a temporary and a local ordinance and institution, but the great body of this teaching has nothing in it that is local, nothing that is temporary. It is universal and abiding. It rests upon the permanent characteristics both of God and of man, the permanent relation of man to God. And here, if nations and families and individuals would but accept it, is a handbook to happiness and well-being that will run on from this life into that which is to come.

2. What is the great central truth which the prophet again and again emphasizes? There is a principle underlying all, a principle on which, as he shows again and again, all welfare must depend. Sometimes he calls it obeying God. Sometimes he describes it as the fear of God. Sometimes he gives it its last and fullest designation, the love of God. To fear, to obey, to love—do not think of those as three stages having anything like chronological succession. Do not think of them as being three well-marked and distinct phases of life in relation to God. They are aspects of the same act. To fear God is to reverence Him, to honour Him, to bow before Him, adoring His wisdom, His majesty, His might, His goodness, His power, to look up to Him with awe and yet with loyalty. The fear of the Lord is not the terror of the pagan for his grim idol, but a fear which, while it chastens and disciplines the soul, does not clothe it in heaviness or enshroud it with gloom. To fear, to obey, to love God—it is one act. Again and again all the prophet's teaching, however wide the circle through which it sweeps, returns to this central truth, and on it he makes everything depend. The recurring phrase is 'that it may be well with thee.' With more or less of wisdom or unwisdom men are always seeking prosperity. That a man should do well is his hope for himself. It is the hope of all who feel kindly towards him. And ever since the light of revelation shone upon the human path, the truth has been set before us that, to do well, nation, household, men, and women, must love God and must find in God their supreme, their sole object. Reverence and worship, a holy fear and a trustful, grateful love, that is religion in its essential spirit. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.'

3. Now, the love of God is a phrase to give to a child and to offer to a sage. A philosopher will not feel that he can soon dispose of it, penetrate it through and through, weigh it, measure it, give you its ultimate equation. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' Why, twenty centuries have been offering comment upon the magic, the magnificence, the comprehensiveness, of that command, and they have not exhausted it; and, meanwhile, babes, the little ones of human life, its poor, its sick, its humble-minded, are finding that it verifies itself and pours floods of light through the soul that believes it. Human life building its hopes and seeking its happiness in loving and serving God—how simple is that summary of all the complex details of life and duty. This great and wonderful revelation that we have before us, given to man at sundry times and in divers manners, with many mysterious elements in it, was summarized by our Lord Himself when He said, 'This is the first and great commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all that is within thee' (that is religion), 'and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (that is morality). And here we have heard the conclusion of the whole matter. Our Lord Jesus Christ came not to introduce a new religion, not to introduce a new morality,

not to shift the cardinal points of the moral universe; but He came that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled, that that which God had demanded from the first, and which He cannot but demand from man, seeing that God is God and man is man—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God'—might be made possible, might be accomplished, and that every obstacle to the fulfilment of that command might be taken away.

We look back through all these centuries, and are often under strong temptation to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We are almost ready to believe that there is more wisdom in a leading article in a modern newspaper than there is in the Pentateuch; and occasionally we give ourselves airs of discriminating patronage towards this early wisdom. But this early wisdom, amid all the temporary forms and accompaniments of providence with which it is manifested, went straight to the mark and centre of man's need. There is nothing more searching, nothing that fits the moral and spiritual condition of man to-day more absolutely and exactly than such teaching as we have before us. Here are the people of Israel about to be welded into a nation, to take upon them the perils and the joys of national existence. They were going into a land which would nourish them handsomely, where prosperity was practically assured. They were going to have a part and a place in the great responsibilities, the great temptations, the great privileges, of a flourishing national life. And as they crossed the threshold, coming of age in this world, coming into their estate, the prophet tells them that it would be well with them if they feared God, if they kept His commandments; and then, melting, as it were, the majesty of His great precept into its ultimate tenderness and goodness, he says, 'Hear, O Israel: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength, and it shall be well with thee; thou shalt prolong thy days.'

¶ I got into conversation one day in a railway carriage with a soldier. He belonged to the National Reservists, being a middle-aged man. I soon found him to be thoughtful and observant about affairs in general. He said one thing which is certainly worth passing on: 'When I was a boy, I knew an old man, who used to say, "If ever England lose her faith in God, she will have to come off her peg." ' The Reservist added, 'I can't call myself religious, but I am quite sure that old man was right.' [1]

## The Development of Revelation.

Deut. vi. 3.—'The Lord God of thy fathers.'

So Moses could speak of God. For the God of their fathers was the God of 'each succeeding race.' But there was development in the knowledge of God. The Israelites themselves seem to have been conscious that the revelation of the Divine nature had been gradually imparted to them. There may, perhaps, have been a time in their early history when their conception of God did not differ much from those of the surrounding nations. The truth probably is that, as other nations, for example the Egyptians, had much more of spiritual religion than we used to suppose in the days when their ancient records were unknown to us, so the Jews, if we examine the Old Testament critically, had much more of superstition and idolatry than it was once common to acknowledge. These old superstitions, which they had inherited from former ages and which they had in common with other nations, were always clinging to them and returning upon them. What they had peculiar to themselves was not the higher moral or religious sentiment of the whole race, but a few great men of whom other nations have never had the like, who first taught the true nature of God, who first sought to awaken in the minds of their fellow-men the moral and spiritual nature of religion, who stood apart from existing institutions, and seem to have been not much regarded in their own lifetime or by their own nation, yet whose words have 'lightened every man who cometh into the world.' The writings of the prophets of the seventh and eighth centuries before Christ are the true religion of Israel.

[1] J. W. Moeran, *Illustrations from the Great War*, 126.

1. Without attempting to recover what may be termed the prehistoric religion of the Israelites, we observe traces of great changes, not unacknowledged by themselves, in their thoughts about the Divine nature. Once God had been known to them only by the name of Elohim, which scarcely distinguished Him from the other gods of the polytheistic peoples who surrounded them. Afterwards they knew Him by the solemn and more abstract title of Jahweh or Jehovah, a word which is connected with the verb of existence, and seems to indicate the permanence of the Divine nature. There was a time when God had walked with Adam in the garden; when He had partaken with Abraham of the calf which he had dressed; when He had talked with Moses as a man talks with his friend; but every Israelite would have felt, as we should do, the incongruity of transferring these ancient representations to the time of David or that of one of the kings. Men look back upon Paradise or to some golden age as to a time in which, as they believe, there was a nearer approach to God;

Upon the breast of new-created Earth
Man walked, and angels to his sight appeared,
Crowning the glorious hills of Paradise.

But they forget that the nearer vision of God is also the narrower, and that to comprehend the whole of the visible world they must ascend to the invisible.

2. The Israelitish prophets seem also to have been aware that many things said by them of old respecting the nature or acts of the Divine Being stood in need of correction. Thus, while in the histories the bloody and perfidious destruction of the house of Ahab and of the prophets of Baal by Jehu is attributed to his zeal for God, who had anointed him by the hand of His prophet, there was not wanting a prophet, Hosea, in the next generation, who foretold that the Lord would 'avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu.' Thus again, while we are taught in the second commandment that 'God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children,' the prophet Ezekiel, apparently alluding to these words, declares with authority that henceforward there shall be no more this proverb in the house of Israel, 'the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,' but every soul shall bear his own iniquity. The arbitrary is exchanged for the moral, even in spite of the appearances of the surrounding world. The beneficent aspect of the Divine nature is exhibited to us as well as the terrible, which had absorbed the minds of the people in earlier ages. The religion of love is combined with that of fear. The terrible Jehovah, who is ready to pour out the vials of His wrath on the backsliding race, is also the God who 'loves them freely,' and draws them to Him 'with bonds of love.'

3. Here we must notice a confusion which besets the study of the Israelitish religion—the erroneous opposition between the Old Testament and the New. They have differences no doubt, great and important; but differences which have no real existence are often made between them. When God is said to be represented in the one as the God of justice, in the other as the God of love; when the Old Testament is opposed to the New as the law to the gospel, the thunder of Mount Sinai to the meekness and gentleness of Christ—this is really a very inconsiderate and partial way of viewing the subject. For in the Old and New Testaments alike God is represented to us equally as a Father and a King, as a God of love and mercy and a God of justice. In both He is the God of individuals as well as of nations, a God who is not far 'from every one of us.' The truer distinction, perhaps the only distinction, which can be consistently maintained between them is that in the Old Testament God is revealed to His people Israel, and through them to the world, by the word of Moses, Isaiah, and the prophets; that in the New Testament He has spoken not to one nation only, but to the whole world by His Son, Jesus Christ.

The good intent of God became the Christ,
And lived on earth—the Living Love of God,
That men might draw to closer touch with heaven,
Since Christ in all the ways of man hath trod.[1]

[1] John Oxenham, *Bees in Amber*, 48.

## The God of the Old Testament.

Deut. vi. 4.—'The Lord our God.'

WHAT are the ideas of God which the children of Israel had and which we find in the Old Testament?

1. First among the conceptions of God which we find in the Old Testament is that He is the God of Nature. The Israelites, of course, knew nothing of the fixed laws by which the world is governed. Their heaven was above them, their place of the departed below, the earth was a large plain which divided these, the stars were the hosts of whom Jehovah was the Lord. Just beyond the visible universe He dwelt, sometimes revealing Himself for a moment to the eye of the prophet 'sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up,' or having 'the body of heaven in his clearness.' His power is shown both in the ordinary and in the extraordinary working of Nature. He makes the field barren or fruitful; He gives or withholds from Israel corn, wine and oil; the silver also and the gold and the wool and the flax with which they adorn themselves are His gifts. For their sake He makes a covenant with the wild beasts, for whom He also provides. He hath set the round world so fast that it cannot be moved (this is the manner in which the Israelitish prophet expresses that confidence which to us is given by what we term the uniformity of the laws of Nature). The good and evil which come to men, the storm, the drought, the pestilence, equally with the beneficial rain or the fertilizing sunshine, are regulated by His pleasure. 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.' That is the picture of the world in repose. But not less is His presence seen in the earthquake and the storm, when, as we read in the 18th Psalm: 'the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.' 'He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.'

2. Yet this physical government of the world is also a moral government, in which God distributes rewards and punishments to His people. He is not only their Creator, but their Judge, who gives to every man according to his works. True, the prophet or psalmist sometimes finds that the mystery of the world is too hard for him, as it has been for many a one in every age, when he sees the wicked in such prosperity and flourishing like a green bay-tree; or when, like Job, he contrasts the consciousness of his own rectitude with the misery of his outward circumstances; or when, like the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes, after surveying the world, he acknowledges that all is vanity, and that there is one event to the righteous and the wicked, yet still maintains, in spite of all this, that to fear God and keep His commandments is the conclusion of the whole matter. Even to the psalmist the ways of God were not cleared up 'until he went into the sanctuary and considered the end of these men.' He, too, reflected with gratitude that he had 'never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.' Such were the partial answers which in those ancient times men were able to give to the common difficulties which beset us and them in relation to the Divine government of the universe.

3. When we speak of Jehovah being revealed to men in the Old Testament as the moral Governor of the world, we must remember, however, one important limitation which narrows this conception. Though He is the God of the whole earth, 'who sits upon the circle of the heavens,' before whom the nations are as nothing compared with His greatness, yet He is also in a special manner the God of the Jewish people. With them He is in direct relation as their King and Judge, as their Father and Friend. But the other nations of the world come within the circle of His providence chiefly in so far as their fortunes affect the Jewish race; they are on the outskirts of His government, and the furthest vision of the prophet hardly pierces to a time when there shall be one religion spread over the whole earth. No ancient nation ever thought of other nations as equally with themselves

the objects of a Divine care. It would have been hard, almost impossible, for them to do so. Is it not hard for us also to realize what we most certainly believe—or at least declare that we believe—that all other human beings, the poorest, the weakest, those who dwell in distant climes, or those who lived in past ages, are and were as much the object of a Divine solicitude as we ourselves are? The national religions of the world came first; they were schoolmasters, as we may say, parodying slightly the words of St. Paul, 'to bring men to the universal religion.' The later religions of the world, whether Christianity or Buddhism or Muhammadanism, have all claimed to be universal, limited to no favoured race or tribe, however imperfectly the disciples of all of them have been able to carry out this Divine inspiration.

4. It is out of this relation of Jehovah to the Jewish people that the tender human relation of God to man was developed by the prophets. They spoke of the power which nothing could resist, of the justice which no man could escape; they were never weary of describing in material imagery the control which was exercised by Him over the works of Nature. Yet this same mighty God is the gentlest and most loving of rulers; the Father and the Friend, the Consoler and Redeemer, even more than the Conqueror and King. His love as far exceeds human love as His strength exceeds human strength. He is the Shepherd who feeds His flock and gathers the Lambs in His arms; He is the Spouse of Israel as well as her Lord, whom she is constantly deserting, and who is always ready to receive her again. There is no movement towards repentance, no cry for mercy that does not at once enter into His ears. The prisoner and the oppressed, all those who in early and disturbed states of society are least regarded, the the special objects of His care; He is the Father of the fatherless, and in Him they find mercy. 'When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'

¶ In some old-fashioned, may I say wrong-headed, treatises of theology, such as Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses,* the God of Israel is described to us as a sort of king or magistrate who keeps His people in order by rewards and punishments. And there have not been wanting writers in our own days who think that this, whether true or not, is about as high a notion as we can form of the Divine nature. This is the old fallacy of might prevailing over right, the theory of the strong man, as it is sometimes called, transferred from the sphere of human things to the Divine. How unlike this is either to the love of God on which the prophets delighted to dwell, or to the power of God which is ever on the side of righteousness, I need not stop to consider.[1]

5. Thus far we have been contemplating the Divine Nature in relation either to the outward world or to the Jewish world. There remains the highest and greatest question of all, so far as it can be separated from these. What is God in His own innermost being, when separated from the accidents of time and place? How shall we describe that God who existed before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were formed? There is one word, hardly translatable into other languages, because the Israelitish prophets have themselves infused into it a depth of meaning under which all the attributes of God are comprehended. This is 'holiness'; and God is called by them 'the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy.' It is difficult for us to comprehend the whole signification of this word. It means moral goodness, it means righteousness, it means truth, it means purity —but it means more than these. It means the spirit which is altogether above the world, and yet has an affinity with goodness and truth in the world. It implies separation as well as elevation, dignity as well as innocence. It is the personification of the idea of good. It is the light of which the whole earth is full, which is also the fire that burns up the ungodly. It has a side of awe as well as of goodness. It suggests the thought, not of direct punishment or suffering to be inflicted on the wicked, but rather, 'How can we sinners venture into the presence of a holy God? What unclean

[1] B. Jowett.

person can behold His face and live? Like other ideas of perfection, it may be called in the language of philosophy, transcendental, that is to say, not wholly capable of being expressed in human language. After we have combined all the aspects of truth or goodness in one, there remains something more which is above us, which we can feel rather than describe.

¶ In a double aspect God's holiness is presented to us. It is an unflecked diamond, white from soil and spot; and it is a passionate ruby, warm and aflame. It is the uttermost of recoil from sin; and it is the uttermost of attachment for good.

It is the greatest of positives, as certainly as it is the greatest of negatives. If He is the contradiction of spiritual ugliness, He is the embodiment of spiritual grace and perfection. 'And what,' cried Augustine, 'is all that any man can say when speaking of Thee, my God, my Life, my Joy?' 'Even the most eloquent are dumb,' he confessed. They have need of 'one word more.' They will require to call to their aid a language hitherto unminted, 'fit, and fair, and simple, and sufficient.' Yet Augustine essayed the impossibility. 'Who is God save our God? Most merciful, yet most just; most hidden, yet most near; most beautiful, yet most strong; stable, yet incomprehensible; never young, and never old; ever in action, yet ever at rest; still gathering, yet lacking nothing; supporting, filling, and overshadowing all things. Thou art jealous, without uneasiness; repentest, yet grievest not; art angry, yet always calm; changest Thy works, while Thy purpose is unchanged; recoverest what Thou findest, yet didst never lose; art never in need, and yet art gladdened by gains.' It is a soaring and satisfying portraiture; but the august, entrancing, awful Original is ten thousand times more astonishing, more soaring, and more satisfying.[1]

[1] Alexander Smellie, *The Well by the Way*, 127.

## The Religion of the Israelite.

Deut. vi. 4, 5.—'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.'

We do not know exactly when these words were written, but we know very nearly indeed when they were first published to the world. It was on the memorable occasion when King Josiah had the recently discovered law-book read in the ears of the people, and bound them by a covenant to walk in the ways of the Lord (2 Kings xxiii. 1-2). This took place in the year 621 before the Christian era.

It is worth while to glance round and see at what point in history the world then stood. Rome had not yet emerged from the period of the Kings; it had not yet begun that long struggle which brought it to the front among the nations. It was just about this time that the laws of Draco were promulgated at Athens; the reforms of Solon were to come some thirty years later. Of the Wise Men, both Solon and Thales could hardly have reached manhood. There was a powerful kingdom in Lydia, not yet at its height. The power of Egypt was on the wane; it had already been overrun by the Assyrians, and Thebes had been destroyed, and it was to be overrun again by the Babylonians; about a century more of independent existence was all that remained for it. The last of the great Assyrian conquerors (Asshurbanipal, the Sardanapalus of the Greeks) had just died, and though the Assyrian civilization seemed to be at its highest, its sudden and utter collapse was near. The rise of Media, soon to be absorbed in the Persian Empire, was making itself felt, but its great days were yet to come. If we date from the beginnings of Greece and Rome, which contained in themselves the germs of the culture of the modern European world, we might call the time of which we are speaking the hour before the dawn. It was at such a moment that this solitary voice was heard in Palestine, and from it there rings down the ages—'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy

God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.'

1. This great saying sums up, as Israel itself very soon came to know, the essence of Israel's religion. The key-words are two—the little words 'one' and 'love.' Each is charged with the profoundest meaning, and together they wonderfully supplement each other. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God' implies that God is an object of human love; if He is loved, He must be lovable. It is the climax of anthropomorphism. Man has the audacity to ascribe to God the very highest of which he is conscious in himself. That on the one hand; but on the other, at the same moment, he ascribes to Him another epithet, which is the absolute corrective of anthropomorphism. God is One; that is to say, He embraces the universe; there is no other power or force beyond or outside Him. That could be said only of Spirit—only of pure Spirit and infinite Spirit.

(1) It was a new truth that God is One. Let us think of the steps by which it had been reached. We know that 'Lord' in our English Versions stand for 'Jehovah' (Jahveh), the special name for Israel's God. That is the first step, the appropriation of this name. The fundamental principle of Israel's religion is that Jehovah is Israel's God, and that Israel is Jehovah's people. But this affirmation, so far, does not imply that there are no other gods. The natural idea in antiquity was that every nation had its own god or gods, who did not interfere with the existence of other gods. The second step was to regard Jehovah as more and more superior to other gods, until He became supreme over them, and more and more annexed their functions. In the Book of Amos (ix. 7) it is Jehovah who brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir, just as He brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Ethiopians are His people just as Israel itself is. The final step is the assertion of the unity of God, and the denial of the existence of all other gods, which is carried through with such triumphant and scornful eloquence in Second Isaiah.

(2) Side by side with this gradual progression in asserting the unity of God is a like progression in laying down the doctrine that God shows love for man, and is Himself the object of man's love. This is an aspect of the relation of God to Israel that is specially insisted upon by the prophet Hosea; but it becomes still more characteristic of the Book of Deuteronomy, where the command to love God is repeated in a number of passages almost as fundamental as the text. For instance this—'And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul' (x. 12); and again—'Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway' (xi. 1). The relation is reciprocal. 'The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all peoples: But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He sware unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them' (Deut. vii. 7-10).

¶ A God who is set forth as the creator of man, the sender of the Flood, the caller of Abraham, the deliverer from Egypt—above all, a God to whom the daring challenge is addressed, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?—such a God is lifted by His righteousness and world-wide power far above the local and unrighteous gods of other nations. We can imagine a Moabite song of victory—

> So let all thine enemies perish, Chemosh!

but they would scarcely have added—

> But let them that *love* him
> Be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

Simple and anthropomorphic as the Israelite

conception may be, and not free from limitations and imperfections, still it is mainly ethical, and therefore essentially ethical. . . . A subordinate ethical element in the conception of the divine is not uncommon, and may remain undeveloped; but a God who is mainly ethical must sooner or later be recognized as wholly ethical. Righteousness cannot be partial: it must have all or nothing. A righteous God must be a jealous God who abolishes first unrighteous rivals, then unrighteous conceptions of Himself, till He shines out in that perfect righteousness which is perfect love, and calls for perfect love from men.[1]

2. This is the conception of God that we owe to Israel and the teachers of Israel. No other people ever ventured to raise its affections so high. But what Israel has done has been, not only to lay down in general terms the demand for such a high-pitched direction of its affections, but to leave us actual examples of the working of these feelings in the psalms and psalm-like compositions that are such a prominent feature of the Old Testament. It would be rather too much to say that Israel created this remarkable type of literature, because something analogous to it is to be found, especially in Babylonia. But Israel undoubtedly gave it a classical shape and form. It was the 'sweet singers' of Israel who first exemplified in their own persons the intimate relations and intercourse between the human soul and its God, and who then gave expression to these relations and intercourse in language of extraordinary fitness and perfection.

(1) The first thing that we notice about this language is its passionate intensity and sincerity. No transports of human lovers were ever more impassioned, and yet there is nothing of the straining and extravagance to which we are accustomed in human love. There is always something sacred and subdued in the adoration which the soul addresses to its God—'Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever' (Ps. lxxiii. 24, 25, *P.B.V.*). In those hot and parched lands the most expressive metaphor is that of thirst and its satisfaction:—'Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks: so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?' (Ps. xlii. 1, 2, *P.B.V.*). Thirst is one of the stronger and more disturbing emotions; but there is not less of depth and beauty in the still and tranquil scene:—'The Lord is my Shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort' (Ps. xxiii. 1, 2, *P.B.V.*). The human element comes in with the 'Shepherd'; and we know what lovely vignettes are suggested by this figure both in the Old Testament and in the New: 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young' (Is. xl. 11, A.V.).

(2) Then, again, think how many tender and touching variations there are upon a theme like this: 'I waited patiently for the Lord: and he inclined unto me, and heard my calling. He brought me also out of the horrible pit, out of the mire and clay: and set my feet upon the rock, and ordered my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth: even a thanksgiving unto our God' (Ps. xl. 1-3 *P.B.V.*). Among all these variations there is perhaps none more exquisite than those words which haunted the mind of Bishop Butler on his deathbed—'*Sicut oculi servorum.*' In the Prayer Book Version they run:—'Unto thee lift I up mine eyes: O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, even as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress: even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us' (Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2 *P.B.V.*).

(3) Observe the combination of a strong sense of the transcendence of God, expressed in the simple, natural way in which the Jew thought of such transcendence through the idea of God as throned in the heavens, with the sense of His nearness to man upon earth, en-

[1] H. M. Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, 24.

couraging His servants to be on the watch for the slightest intimation of His will. The most magnificent expression of this double idea of transcendence and nearness amounting to immanence is that famous verse, Isaiah lvii. 15:—'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' Passages like these are an absolute safeguard against any wrong kind of anthropomorphism. The fullest and the most explicit is Ps. cxxxix. Every thought and intent of the heart lies naked and open before God's sight; the Psalmist cannot move a step upon his way without the presence of his Unseen Companion, and yet this Companion of his is unseen. He is pure Spirit, omniscient and omnipresent, filling the universe, and yet so close to each individual soul that its most tremulous motion is regarded—'Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear' (Is. lxv. 24).

Is not this the most perfect conception of God that it has ever entered into the heart of man to conceive? Would it have been possible for the human heart to conceive it without the prompting and the guiding of the Holy Spirit? At least, is not the belief that there has been such prompting and guiding entirely congruous with the whole view that man who has come forth from God returns to Him again, and has never been, and will never be, separated from Him, except by that one barrier which is put in the way by sin? There is the possibility of a philosophical idea of God but the full content of the idea cannot be given by philosophy. It is given in the first instance by revelation—in other words, by the Divinely-aided upward striving of the human mind. And it is verified by the religious experience of the race, an experience ever new and ever old, repeated all down the ages in the persons of those who, in whatever degree, have walked with God on earth, and whom He has taken to Himself. Beyond this there may be room for philosophic speculation. But no speculation can impair the assurance on which the religious conclusion stands, because it rests on the experience of countless individuals of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues.

¶ Philosophers may infer the absolute from the relative: they have done so from Plato onwards. But there remains a great gulf fixed between the two spheres. Our minds, dependent for their concepts upon the data supplied by sense-perceptions, cannot cross it. We can apprehend the eternal, we cannot comprehend it. We shall be wise if we recognise our limitations and refuse to make rash definitions.

Nevertheless, what we can know of God on the eternal plane does surpass what we can say. Most men have to some extent, and some possess to a large degree, that mystic faculty which can rise outside time and space into consciousness of contact or communion with the universal. There comes a flash of revelation, a moment when we are rapt out of our earthly selves into a region of calm and changelessness, where we feel that complexity is resolved into unity, where the discord of our problems and the contradictions of our logic are dissipated in a harmony which satisfies and convinces, though it does not explain. When we return to earth, we come possessed of a certainty of the oneness and, I think, of the rightness of things. We have felt and known the one, and in the light of that knowledge we can accept the tyranny of the many.[1]

## The Highest Imperative.

Deut. vi. 5.—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.'

'THOU shalt love'—the three words suggest a problem, and it is one of the great problems. How is it possible ever to demand love? How is it possible to love to order? On the surface view of things there seems to be a contradiction in the very mention of the word 'love' in a command. 'Love,' it is said, 'is a spirit which must rise up freely in the heart. It must be unforced and unconstrained. It cannot be demanded, but must be a spontaneous offering. To claim it as a duty is to destroy it at a breath.'

1. The difficulty arises from the fact that in

[1] Charles E. Raven, *What Think Ye of Christ?* 9.

our ordinary human relationships we tend to make the word 'love' synonymous with 'sentiment.' We say that we love people for whom we have a feeling of affection. Their presence inspires a warmth in the heart. It seems utterly impossible for us to control that feeling. We cannot call it forth at will. It depends upon mysterious affinities. Either it is, or it is not, there. We cannot by all our striving stir ourselves into a feeling of affection for those who do not naturally inspire it. To make the attempt is to fall into the perils of unreality and insincerity. Forced sentiment is a sickening production, which blesses neither the giver nor the receiver. Now, it is taking over thoughts of this kind to the command to love God that is the cause of many of our difficulties. Human love can never be a parallel for man's love to God. We are moving in a different order altogether. In man's love to man we are in a realm of equalities. In man's love to God we are in a realm of inequalities. The holiness and majesty of God tower over us. We behold and adore from afar. Even when we speak of God's nearness, the wonder of it is never felt truly by the soul unless we come to it from a sense of the inevitable distance. Easy familiarity with God is mere irreverence. Though our Lord used the highest human love to shed light upon what God's love to us means, He did not use human love as a parallel for our love to God. The two loves are of a different kind.

2. But, in spite of this, there is a kind of love known to us in human experience which does afford some faint parallel to our love to God. There is a love in human life which may rightly be commanded. Patriotism gives us a hint of it. There comes a time when, if love of country is not given as a free offering, it may rightly be commanded. The feeling may be absent, but in crisis, when a nation's freedom is at stake, men may be compelled to serve the land to which they have owed so much. We say lightly that love cannot be compelled. No, not love as feeling! But love as life and action and service can be commanded! There are loves which have a moral imperative behind them. To some extent the love which has its centre in our homes is of that kind. We can never be entirely free from the obligation to love those who brought us into this world. 'Thou shalt honour thy father and mother.' There is a moral imperative behind the loves of home, and the love of country is of the same order. Born into our native country, apart from will or choice, nurtured in the inheritance of her past, fed by her spirit, protected by her arm, we owe to her all that it lies within our power to give. 'Thou shalt love.' And the man who shows no sense of his obligations must be treated as morally delinquent and compelled. In these deep matters the truth is not determined by the caprice of individual mood and taste and sentimental aptitude. There is a solemn imperative behind love which makes it a command laid upon us.

3. The surface view which says, 'Love cannot be commanded; it must be left to man's freedom to give or to withhold at will,' is not the compass of truth. It is unsatisfactory in the extreme. And in the end it leads to the destruction of the very freedom in whose name it speaks. The deepest thing in life is not freedom but obedience, and freedom may be rightly claimed only in order to fulfil that obedience. We have lost touch with thoughts of this order. Our religious life has been more and more denuded of the imperatives which are the soul of greatness. We have fallen into the grip of little ideas. Thought has been moving in the direction of exalting the freedom of man more than the majesty of God. It has come to this, that we respond more keenly to the thought that man must be left to give to God what he freely wills, than that God should be obeyed at all costs. What are the consequences? They are obvious enough.

(1) The decline in the habit of worship is one of them. Men left to themselves have drifted out of touch with worship altogether. We have spoken to them in our churches in such a way that they think it does not greatly matter how or when they worship. And of those who come, how many or how few feel the imperative to come? It is better, of course, in every way, that people should come to God's house because they want to come rather than

out of a sense of duty. That is trite and obvious. But what is not so trite and obvious is that the liking to come will slowly but surely fade unless they feel they are there in obedience to the will of God. That is what has been happening before our eyes in the religious life of the past generation.

¶ One of the greatest benefits of church-going is that it helps the young to realize their possession of a moral and spiritual nature. It is an axiom of life and of science that any unused faculty weakens, dwindles, dies. So the consciousness of moral and spiritual facts must be kept before the mind or we lose sight of them. If a painter or a musician or a writer loses something of skill in a few weeks of idleness, it is but natural that keenness of conscience and of moral discernment would be still more readily impaired by disuse.

The church says every week, in effect, to everyone: 'You are a moral agent; there is something in you that is not elsewhere in the world, except in your fellow-men; and life for you is a serious and noble affair.' [1]

(2) It has affected other things besides worship. In the wake of a decline in habits of worship has followed a question of uncertainty about the foundation of the moral law itself. On every hand we are the victims of a conception of liberty which means little else than 'go as you please' and 'do as you like.' It has gone far to destroy the old idea of the home. It has brought the State to the edge of the precipice of revolution and civil strife. It has produced a literature whose note is restlessness and rebellion, but without an elementary notion of reform. And it has resulted in a religious life which is impoverished of vitality and effectiveness. If 'By their fruits ye shall know them' is the supreme test, then no generation was more certainly called upon to challenge the tendencies of the age than are we.

¶ I have been reading some words this week written by Dr. Dale in his book on the 'Ten Commandments,' which seem to me to be even more apposite now than when they were first written. They are on the subject of the first commandment, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' Dr. Dale says: 'The sin which is our supreme shame is not the sin against which this law warned the Jewish race. If He were to speak to many of us it would be necessary to condemn us for having no god at all. We confess in our Creed His majesty and greatness as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, but the confession is a tradition, not the expression of a real and living faith. There is no devout awe in His presence. His glory does not subdue us to wonder and fear. When we are professing to worship Him our hearts are not hushed with reverence and there is no fire or rapture in our praise. When we sin grossly we are stung with self-reproach, but we do not fear His anger. The hope of winning His approbation is not an active and energetic motive to doing right. Are not many of us conscious that if we lost God from our Creed no element of joy or terror would be lost to our life? The appalling truth is that many of us have sunk into atheism.' [1]

[1] C. D. Wilson, *Making the Most of Ourselves*, 228.

## In the Heart.

Deut. vi. 6.—'These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.'

THAT is a fine and noble saying. Every nation carries something—some things—in its heart, national sentiments and traditions. Why, if we were to make a moral dissection of an unknown corpse, if we could lay bare by some skill of knife and scalpel the working of temperament and passion and sentiment, we could tell whether it was a French, or a German, or an English heart that lay upon the experimenting table. All nations carry a treasure of sentiment and tradition in their hearts. But the supreme thing for a nation to carry in its heart is the great charge which its God, its Father, its Redeemer, has laid upon it. 'These words . . . shall be in thine heart,' enshrined, treasured, in the centre of thought, in the centre of emotion, in the centre of will.

1. It is well when the Word of God governs my home life. When I teach it to the children, when I talk of it sitting in the house and walking by the way, lying down and rising up, I

[1] S. M. Berry.

am giving them the sublimest theme for meditation, the best rule of conduct, the strongest safeguard against evil, the passport to the family of the Lord and the city of the King. I am rendering them the fruitfullest service conceivable. I am clothing them in armour of proof.

2. And it is well when the Word of God governs my social life. Let it be written on the posts of my house and on my gates. Then my neighbours will know where I stand and whom I serve. They will not come to me to talk gossip and scandal, and to whisper away the good name of man and woman with idle tongues. They will not wish me to be a partner with them in any evil work. They will be drawn rather towards the Book and towards the Lord.

3. But when may I talk of them to my children and write them on my gates? When I have them in my heart. Alas! that we should show such light and easy and careless guardianship of our best treasure. Men who will lock with double locks fifty pounds' worth of gold or silver in a strong box will let doors and windows lie open by night and day where infinitely superior treasure is at great exposure and great risk. Would that we kept at our heart, well in the centre of our life, the abiding conviction, the fixed, secret, loyal, central, working belief of life, that all true welfare is found in God, that the service of God in Christ is the strength, the safeguard, the sanctification, of our existence. But we dismiss these supreme and eternal interests to the very suburbs of our life. Instead of allowing them to be central, we toss them out towards the circumference; and, at the centre of life, are found wholly inadequate motive and feeling and purpose. 'These things shall be in thy heart.'

¶ I have been told that Mr. Chase, the great American artist who recently passed to his rest, was in the habit of carrying about in his pocket small objects which he enjoyed looking at—an exquisite ring or some rarely attractive curiosity. He had his long seasons of studious contemplation of the loveliness that he yearned to capture in line and colour. But he had also moments of gazing when he turned his eyes on some beautiful thing. And we may follow his plan in the deepest things of the spirit. We can carry a divine signet ring about with us. We can carry with us through the day some great word of glorious revelation, and at odd moments we can bring it out and look into the depths of its eternal beauty. What is to prevent the busiest among us having some rich promise of grace which we can bring out and look at as we walk by the way?[1]

## Teaching the Children.

**Deut. vi. 7.—'And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.'**

EVERY nation teaches many things to its children. The continuity of national life is an extremely interesting subject. The generations are always flowing into each other. We see no join, no seam, in the structure of national life. Silently and constantly, as in the movement of a river, the separate elements in a nation's life are mysteriously and wonderfully combined. Parents, before they know it, or apart from their thinking of it, give themselves into a new generation. By and by they pass away, and the life of the succeeding generation flows on.

1. Now, what does every generation teach to its successor? It teaches its language, its laws, its customs. It preserves by instinctive action the continuity of national existence. And it teaches more. Every generation, whether it thinks that it is doing so or not, is communicating its own morals to the generation that is springing up, imparting its own ideas, conveying by all manner of subtle but very effective means its estimate of things, its sentiments, its convictions, or its want of convictions. And all this works automatically. But here the prophet asks—claims, indeed, in God's name—that this great law or principle of transmission shall not be allowed to work blindly and aimlessly; that, as we live, we shall not transmit we know not and care not what, we shall not let things just take their

[1] J. H. Jowett, *The Eagle Life*, 27.

chance. He claims and asks that each generation shall deliberately, responsibly, in the fulfilment of a noble trust, teach its children the fear of the Lord. That is the very noblest action of a nation's life. There is nothing within the sphere of a nation's life that should impress the imagination more sacredly than the fulfilment of such a trust—generation after generation teaching its children the fear of the Lord, handing on the great and sacred trust of truth whereby nations and families live.

2. But godlessness of national and family life widely prevails. It is even the ideal for which some contend. Within recent years a well-known public man said that the thing to aim at was to get rid of 'the theological conception of life,' to build life on a basis of assured fact and cautious inference from fact. Man, he declared, had to spend too much of his strength in aspirations after the unseen and unreal; things would go better with him when he had eliminated the idea of God. Could it be possible to say more successfully in an equal number of words the thing that is not desirable? We are going quite far enough and fast enough towards getting rid of 'the theological conception of life.' There are increasing multitudes whose conduct and character are being built up with no reference to what God wills and commands, to what is desirable in God's sight. There are increasing multitudes who have no desire for more definite standards and principles than those that are furnished in a rough sort of way by general social existence. The theological conception of life—God made me; God lives; God is wise, holy, and good; God loves righteousness and hates evil—is that a conception which we can afford to get rid of? Or rather, are those who have got rid of it the better for having done so? the tens of thousands, for instance, who have so far got rid of the habit of worshipping God that they are spending the Sabbath without one minute of prayer or praise? They are released from business. They owe that to Christianity. Christ gave us the resurrection day. They are indebted to Christianity for the holiday. They would never have had it but for Jesus Christ. But throughout the day they do not give God thanks; they do not ask God's forgiveness. They feel no need of strengthening and renewing the springs of their moral and spiritual life by lifting up hands towards the Holy One, the God of their life. Are they the better for it, the wiser, the happier?

3. Thou shalt teach these things to thy children. Of course it is easy to say that these words give covering and sanction to our Sunday Schools.. They do; but they are immensely wider and broader. There is a recognition of family life here. 'Thy children.' Thou 'shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Very vivid, very pictorial, this walking, resting, rising. What does it stand for? It stands for common human life, which, allowing for differences of climate and temperament, is essentially and always the same. There is a father, and there is a mother, and there are children; and there is a home—a cottage or a palace or a tent. There is a dwelling together; and, whether it be under scorching suns or under bleak skies, in that family life our race has its perpetual renewal for good and for evil. And thou shalt talk of these things: the love of God, the goodness of God, the mercy of God, the majesty of God, man's dependence upon God, man's duty to God, God's Son, Jesus Christ. 'These things,' instead of having temples built for them in which they shall exclusively dwell, instead of having days set apart for them when they shall have exclusive attention, these things shall belong to the hearth and home, to the days of health and the days of sickness, to the work-days and the holidays. Let God be worshipped in the family. Let God be honoured and remembered in the days of prosperity and happiness. Let the young people amid all their springing joys remember Him who loves them and watches over them. Let parents, anxious for their children's health, their education, their advance in business life, surround their children with prayer. Let them stretch over them the safeguards of the godly household.

¶ My father's religion was not violent or obtrusive; it was more felt than seen; it made no noise. When it spoke, it spoke in natural tones; and while it did not despise the ear, it had a special love for the heart and understanding. Under it we children came to know, in the quietest possible way, that God was good, and greatly to be feared because He was so good. The Saviour's name, His gentle life, His bitter cross, His bright resurrection, His heavenly glory, His all-availing intercessions; these and such like were in various ways wafting their sacred influence around us and into us every day. The old hearth is cold; but the old home will never be cold until it ceases to be remembered, and while heaven lasts, that time will be far distant. The following are some elements whereby, in the Bethel of my father's house, his Christian life was breathed into us.

(1) *His blessing asked at meals.*—This was not long, but it was spoken with great solemnity; so much so that each simple meal had the air, if not the virtue, of a sacrament. He began 'O infinitely great and glorious, and highly exalted Jehovah'; bowing his head, and with his left hand held out and kept moving to the modulation of his voice, and this again as deep drawn as it could be, and all in a tremble, as if labouring with a larger soul in it than it could well hold. Thus several times every day, we felt carried heavenward as on the wings of a great eagle. What an impression it gave us of God's mercy, in food and in forgiveness! For it was all asked, with pardon of sins, 'for Jesus the Redeemer's sake.'

(2) *His family worship.*—In home phrase, this was to 'tak' the Book.' The door was 'snibbed,' to prevent intrusion. Father and mother at opposite sides of the hearth, the children circling about their feet, the words, 'Let us worship God' were spoken, and then we all felt that the place and the moments were not our own. It was God's house—a beautiful commingling of His house and ours; for still it was our home, only lifted up, as it were, and set down for the time being at the feet of God. We were at the top of Jacob's ladder; the breath of heaven was about us; visions of angels passed and repassed before the inward eye while the psalm was being sung, the chapter read, the prayer offered up. What sincerity in the eye, what sobriety on the brow, what sacred awe at heart on these occasions!

(3) *His churchgoing.*—Our family pew was as familiar to us as our family board. My father's heart was in the sanctuary. We loved it for his sake, and he taught us to love it for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. We were always there, in one compact group. It was the lifting up of our house bodily into the house of God, which we felt to be both bigger and better than our own. Thus our sympathies were widened. We were but part of a larger family; and our home was but one of 'many mansions' in the great Father's house.[1]

## The Welfare of a Nation.

Deut. vi. 18.—'Thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord; that it may be well with thee.'

The final questions with regard to all peoples are moral and spiritual. Questions of population, commerce, social organization, all have their value; but the moral and spiritual questions are what really count. The Kingdom of God furnishes the final test for all the kingdoms of men. To a devout mind the question presents itself as not merely, How many are we? but, What sort of men and women are we? For surely everyone must be aware that there lies the issue of all national life. Now the teaching of Holy Scripture on the questions of national life, its morals, privileges, duties and perils is extraordinarily rich and apt. That teaching is richer, and more ample than is generally recognized; particularly as regards the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

You may, perhaps, recall the tribute of Milton to these writings:

In them the plainest taught and easiest learnt,
What makes a nation happy and keeps it so;
What ruins kingdoms and lays cities flat.

You may also remember that Coleridge gave the designation 'The Statesmen's Manual' to these writings. He declared, after years of

[1] *Memoir of Thomas Dunlop*, 2ff.

study, that he had never yet met with any piece of political wisdom in the great standard writings of the civilized world whose teaching might not be found, for the most part in a clearer and more impressive style, in Holy Scripture.

These early writings still teach us what is the true tenure of national prosperity and what are the conditions of a nation's welfare. But, of course, they should be intelligently and wisely read. It is not mere snatching at a text here or there that will give us the clue to difficult problems of national life or social organization. Still less will our salvation lie in a minute imitation of ordinances, institutions, and politics which were once connected with the life and fortunes of the chosen people of God. The Mosaic polity has passed away; it was not for all time, but for an age. The institutions of Israel, though fashioned, as we are not afraid of saying, under Divine guidance and authority, were not intended to furnish the pattern on which for all time men and nations should mould their public life. Those particular forms of organization are gone, but in the process of their organization under the great leadership of one who was at once highest statesman and truest prophet, the great principles of man's relations to God are unfolded in a manner to which nothing can be added. Here we learn wherein lie the main principles of national well-being, and what are the great perils to which, under varying conditions, organized communities of men are exposed. If serious-minded and intelligent men will rightly approach these ancient Scriptures, they will find them instinct with life and aglow with the light which we so greatly need for our own daily guidance.

1. See, for example, how the writer, laying down the lines of national organization, begins with formulating not the rights of men but the rights of God: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God; thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all that is within thee.' Our little distinctions between the sacred and the secular, between what is civil and what is religious—those distinctions have their uses, but we must not be misled by them. We must not come to suppose that there are two entirely distinct moral orders existing on the same planet, within one of which God is spiritually authoritative, the Source of all bounty and true welfare, whereas in the other sphere natural forces, laws and agencies other than God have their operation. As soon as men come together for the great purposes of human existence it is well for them to realize that they live by the grace of God, and that they prosper by the grace of God. And before Israel enters upon agriculture, commerce, art, industry, he who is not only a great preacher but a true statesman, says: 'O Israel, keep the commandments and statutes of God that it may be well with thee in the land which the Lord hath promised to thy fathers.'

2. This phrase, 'that it may be well with thee,' is one that recurs so frequently as to have for the ear of the thoughtful reader the air of a familiar refrain. The ear anticipates and then welcomes it. We desire that it may be well with us. There is not a man, there is not a community, that does not with more or less consistency and intelligence desire that things may be well with it. But how inadequate are many prevailing conceptions of welfare. What one-sided, inadequate schemes of welfare are readily accepted, as though the idea of welfare were exhausted by commercial prosperity, by victory in war, by political ascendency. To accept these as exhausting the idea of welfare for a nation is to accept a shred, a fragment, instead of a noble and symmetrical whole.

(1) Earthly prosperity lies manifestly within God's scheme and purpose for men. He has fashioned and furnished this earth on a most bounteous scale. It does not resemble a penitentiary; it is not a model lodging-house in its grim and meagre propriety. It is a rich and bountiful earth; and though we have been living on it for thousands of years, not a month passes but we discover on it new sources of wealth, new delights, and fresh wonders. When God was about to train His people Israel for high and far-reaching purposes He did not drive them into a bare corner of the earth, where a hard living could just be ac-

quired; He gave them a generous inheritance. You remember how Moses becomes lyrical as he describes it—a land whose stones are iron; where they shall eat bread without scarceness; where they shall not lack anything. The welfare of a nation does not exclude temporal blessings. To assert that it does would be an error almost as great as the opposite error of omitting the moral and spiritual elements of welfare. Civilization, the culture of the human mind, the building up of a noble and harmonious and richly-organized life that shall, in some measure, represent the wealth of God's gifts to man—all that is in the Divine order.

(2) But while the great prophet speaks in glowing terms of the bounty and abundance provided for Israel there is no mistaking the lofty, strenuous speech with which he exhorts it to find its chief wealth, its supreme blessing, in the knowledge and love of God. Now, suppose a nation makes a choice of God's temporal bounties and blessings, and then shows itself indifferent to the pursuit of the higher and more enduring elements in its heritage. Suppose a nation, remembering a thousand things beside, forgets God. It remembers all that can enter into the energetic and successful management of earthly affairs, it understands how to make the best of each moral and temporal advantage within its reach; but God, as righteousness, as truth, the revelation He has made of His character, the utterance He has made of His will, the commands He has given, the promises He has put forth—become matters of indifference, forgotten, despised. What then? Then instead of true welfare you have—as the Bible teaches, and a thousand pages of human history show—decadence, disappointment, overthrow. God has made national welfare a matter of probation depending upon God. Think not that Jesus Christ came to destroy this law; He did not come to destroy it but to fulfil it, to give it a still deeper significance, a still more august authority, and to drive home to the heart of nations by fresh motives that early lesson, that man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

¶ We never counted Gibbon among the prophets except by the same indulgence that Saul was once reckoned among the prophets; but very few men have written a finer, more moral sentence than that which he wrote as the title of his great work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* You have many of you read through those stately pages; you have seen the pageant, you have heard the voices, you have looked as upon the action of a great and splendid drama; but with the key that you and I have in our possession we are watching one of the mightiest revolutions of God's government to which human intelligence has ever been invited. Selfishness, lust, dishonesty, cruelty, cunning—and the well-built structure of that massive Empire declined and fell.[1]

## Because.

Deut. vii. 7, 8.—'The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you.'

A DELIGHTFUL and Divine illogicality, says Moses, holds good in the wooing of the soul by God. There is no reason in heaven or earth why God should have taken all this trouble to give you proof of His love, and to endeavour to win yours in return. He loves you just 'because.' 'It wasn't because you were more in number than any people,' He says to the people of Israel.. And then He goes on to rub in the sense of their inadequacy to be considered for one moment fit objects for the Divine love, by adding almost brutally, 'for ye were the fewest of all people.' An earthly monarch would never for one moment have dreamt of forming an alliance or making a liaison with a feeble little folk like you. God Almighty was just as delightfully illogical and unreasoning about it as He was when, having made the sun to rule the day and the moon to rule the night, in the sheer joy of His heart He dipped His hand deep in His bag, and flung the stars about the sky, and then laughed as He thought with

[1] F. W. Macdonald.

pleasure on all those who down the long ages would thank Him for making the stars also. 'He made the stars also,' says the sacred chronicler; and he lets the bare statement go at that, for he can find no adequate reason for the Divine prodigality and inconsequence. God is just like His Son's own Good Samaritan who, next morning, took out two pence, for no reason in the wide world but just that, having done one kind action, he thought he would go one better.

1. Is it not part of the reason for our backwardness in believing and resting in the love of God, that we do not realize that God, who made us in His own image, loves us in precisely the same dear illogical fashion in which we all love? We fancy that He must needs be dazzled with size, 'enamoured by hugeness, in love with avoirdupois.' 'The Lord did not set His love upon you because ye were more in number than any people.' That is just the trouble with our faith. That is what tends to choke our prayers. We simply cannot believe that the prayer of a child by its crib means far more to God than all the swinging planets that go marching round His throne. It may be strange; it may be unbelievable; it may be illogical: but then it is just love all over. If there is anybody who simply cannot for the life of him see why God should love him, or listen to his prayer, or give him one moment's thought, you have hit on the very reasons why He does it all. He loves you, just 'because——'

¶ A working smith, who had made some beautiful wrought iron-gates, had been thanked and praised for his work, and this is what he replied: 'It is indeed a great privilege to get an opportunity to do good work, and one is grateful to those who make it possible for us to do so. I am indeed glad to be a smith and to have the delight of taking a somewhat stubborn metal and shaping it into pleasing forms —to make iron into something like poetry is to me a satisfying destiny.' Is that why the Divine Artificer chose you and me to work on? He might have chosen gold, a more pliable and more precious metal. But something about the very stubbornness of the iron appealed to Him, and He came down to the workshop and wrought, although the fires scorched His blessed face, and the iron tore hands and feet, and pierced His side.

2. If you try to reason it out along the ordinary lines of logic, you won't make much of it. If you try to explain what brought the Son of God to Calvary, or what sent Livingstone to Africa, or Christie to Moukden, you have to give it up, if you think of applying ordinary standards. They told Dugald Christie that he was 'throwing himself away' when he announced his intention of going out as a medical missionary to China. Read his *Thirty Years in Moukden*, and see what God can do with a life that is content to be thrown away. When love tries to be logical, in that moment it dies, and brings forth no fruit.

¶ I received lately from India a letter from another of our missionaries, a man who was a brilliant student of philosophy, a lecturer in the subject in Glasgow University, and the late Principal Caird's prizeman. I have seen the row of his beautifully bound prize volumes, all riddled with worm and warped with the damp, in his bungalow in India. He also thought he would like to throw his life away in the high places of the field, and he has probably done more than any other living man to commend the gospel of Christ to the educated classes of the great town in Western India where his life has been spent. I had the privilege of sending him the other month a sum of money to help him in prosecuting some special advance among the people of his care, in which he had sought my assistance. Through the kindness of one or two friends to whom I never appeal in vain, for they like to trade with the means wherewith God has blessed them, I was able to send my friend a practical expression of our sympathy and support. And this was his reply:

'Your letter and its enclosure came to me by last mail and brought with it extraordinary comfort and cheer. I cannot express to you sufficiently what its coming meant to us and means to us, for we were feeling particularly "down," and it brought a message of cheer far beyond its present exchange value or the

exchange value of any period in history. To think that you and your people, so promptly, and when you might well have considered that your immediate duty had been well done, should have responded to my wail from this far-off region, is a tremendous encouragement and a real rebuke to depression and failing faith. Will you take to yourself and convey to your people my deep gratitude? This kindness and sympathy that you have shown will be a lamp for us through many dark hours that shall come.

I fear that they must come to us here, as they are coming, it would seem, to you and to all the world. Things go wrong so easily, and once they have gone wrong it seems so impossible to get them right again. Problems are looming up before us on every side. But "looming up" is not the right metaphor. They are much more active than that would suggest. I envisage them as horned cattle that, with tail in air and head well down, are bearing down upon us from every direction. India so grievously needs, and in so many senses, a message of reconciliation . . . I sometimes long desperately for a lodge in some wilderness, or in the words of Weller senior, "to keep a pike." But it is courage and faith that one needs. Well, it helps one to have a little more courage and a little more faith when one realizes anew that there are such kind hearts and such true and responsive hearts in auld Scotland.' . . .

How can you account for a man taking on such service, unless you find the key in Calvary and go back to the illogicality of redeeming love. Every time, when you find a servant of God, at home or abroad, employing talents that would have won him fame and riches in any other sphere of activity, for a wage that a scavenger would despise; when you find a soldier dying in a ditch for an ungrateful country in return for a shilling a day; when you find a girl sacrificing herself for a peevish and querulous old parent; when you come across a woman denying herself for an exacting tyrant of a husband; when you behold the Man standing in silence while they spit in His blessed face, and going forth bearing His cross; there is only the one explanation—'I have loved thee, because——'[1]

¶ I intend, therefore, to proclaim the magnificent verities of the Christian gospel. I shall talk with absolute certainty, and with unwavering confidence, about the sin of man, the love of God, the Cross of Christ. If my message is met with a 'why' or a 'wherefore,' I have only one reply—'*Because!*' There is nothing else to be said. The preacher lives to tell a wonderful love-story. And a love-story is never arguable. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son!' Why? *Because!*[2]

## A Great Nation.

Deut. vii. 7.—'Ye were the fewest of all people.'

THE influence of a nation in the world does not depend upon the number of its citizens, or upon the extent and fertility of the land in which it dwells. Sydney Smith, who was one of the wittiest of men, described Scotland as 'the shank-end of England,' England being the rich, juicy gigot, and the northern kingdom not much more than a bone. Certainly Scotland is a small country, and a large part of it is also mountainous and barren; yet it is admitted that the little nation of the Scots exerts an influence in the British Empire much greater than one would expect if one considered only its numbers and its material resources.

But there have been small nations in the past very much greater than the Scottish people are to-day. The two most famous of these, indeed, the two most eminent of all the nationalities that have ever existed in the world, were small nations.

1. One of the two is *Ancient Greece.* Hellas and Peloponnesus, the two parts of Greece, occupy but a small place on the terrestrial globe, or even on a map of Europe. The soil of the country is poor, and stony, and by no means rich in minerals. The coast-line is jagged and rugged, rocky and barren. Yet what a supremely great nation were the Greeks, some hundreds of years before the coming of Christ! Herodotus, who might with truth be

[1] H. L. Simpson, *The Intention of His Soul*, 193.
[2] F. W. Boreham, *Mushrooms on the Moor*, 118.

called the father of geography as well as 'the father of history,' speaks of the poor, stony soil of Greece as being 'a rugged nurse of liberty.' And we may also apply to that romantic country the lines of Wordsworth :—

Two Voices are there; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains; each a mighty Voice:
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!

The struggle of the small Greek states against the Persian tyrant is one of the most inspiring tales in history.

But, besides being for long the home of liberty, Greece was also the abode of pre-eminent and many-sided genius. It was the source of culture; and Athens, 'the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence,' was the chief seat of that culture. The Greeks were 'the fewest of all people'—very few, indeed, as compared with the teeming millions of China and India; and yet their little land was the home of the most melodious language, the most advanced knowledge, and the ripest civilization. Athens, a smaller city than London, was the concentration of the supreme intellect of the world. No other nation, in either ancient or modern times, has produced, within the compass of a few generations, so many men of immortal genius.

2. The other nation is that spoken of in the verse before us, the small and yet great nation of *the Jews*. In mentioning the Greeks and the Jews together, we are reminded of the words of Disraeli: 'All the great things have been done by the little nations. It is the Jordan and the Ilissus that have civilized the modern races.'

Judæa, or the land of Canaan, is without exception the most famous country in the world. It is more celebrated even than ancient Greece. Yet it is a little country, as Greece is; and much of it is also mountainous and sterile. And the Hebrews were, as Moses says here, 'the fewest of all people.' Yet, though a small community as regards both numbers and the acreage of the territory which they possessed, the Hebrews were to strike their roots down deeper than any nation in worth and power. Wherein, then, consists the supreme eminence of the Hebrew nationality? What is it that has made the little country of Canaan—a country no larger than Wales—'the glory of all lands?'

The answer is simple. Judæa, or Canaan, is first the land of the Bible, a book which has influenced the world far more widely and deeply than any other literature. William Ewart Gladstone, the great British statesman of the Victorian era, who was himself an accomplished Greek scholar, has said that 'all the wonders of Greek civilization heaped together are less wonderful than the simple Book of Psalms—the history of the human soul in relation to its Maker.' But Canaan is also Immanuel's land, the country in which the Godhead once dwelt in the flesh, and permitted men to behold His glory. The Man Christ Jesus did infinitely higher service to mankind during a short ministry of three years than Socrates, Plato, and all the wisest of the ancient Greeks have been able to render. In other words, the Hebrew race have been supremely great among the nations of the earth because God specially and supernaturally revealed Himself to them; He spoke to them by His prophets and apostles; He entrusted to them His oracles, the Holy Scriptures; and, when He sent His own Son into the world to redeem it, the Redeemer took hold of the seed of Abraham, and was born a Jew.

Therefore, although the little nation of the Greeks was great, the little nation of the Jews has been immeasurably greater. To Israel 'pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.'

The beam that shines from Sion hill
shall lighten ev'ry land;
The King who reigns in Salem's tow'rs
shall all the world command.

¶ There is no need, in order to a due appreciation of our debt to the ancient Greeks, that we should either forget or disparage the function which was assigned by the Almighty

Father to His most favoured people. Much profit, says St. Paul, had the Jew in every way. He had the oracles of God: he had the custody of the promises: he was the steward of the great and fundamental conception of the unity of God, the sole and absolute condition under which the Divine idea could be upheld among men at its just elevation. No poetry, no philosophy, no art of Greece, ever embraced, in its most soaring and widest conceptions, that simple law of love towards God and towards our neighbour, on which 'two commandments hang all the law and the prophets,' and which supplied the moral basis of the new dispensation.[1]

## The Faithful God.

Deut. vii. 9.—'Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.'

1. It is the fashion in our day to write and talk as though heredity, and the effects of the accumulation of heredity, were somehow sinister enough to drape the heavens in black and silence all the songs of the angels. This law, we are told, can have no moral interpretation consistent with freedom and responsibility. The undoubted tendency of much that is being written and said is to depress the mind with a sense of the relentless force of general laws and influences, and to diminish in the individual the conviction of his power to contend against them.

Avoiding dogmatism about this matter, we may simply say that for one drawback we meet along the pathway of inheritances we have a very legion of resource and help through the gains of time, and of the race. The penalties we have to pay for transgression against law are not a just indictment of the law; they are the penalty of its transgression. God is a faithful God to them that love Him and keep His commandments.

¶ The past lives on in the present, that is what is meant by heredity. There is an inexorableness in the transmission, or, one should rather say, the persistence, of all sorts of inborn or constitutional characteristics. Sometimes it is a trivial feature like a shock of white hair; sometimes it is a deadly vice of blood; sometimes it is all bodily, leaving the spirit unblemished, as in many cripples; sometimes it is a blot on the brain that affects the character now in this way and again in that, but always perniciously. There is no gainsaying the fatalistic impression, and since heredity is just a term for the relation of organic continuity between successive generations, there can be no other side to it. But there is no harm in using the phrase 'the other side of heredity' to indicate that the fatalistic impression of determinateness is not the whole truth. There is another side to the inevitable reappearance of an evil past, another side to the inexorable transmission of defects, another side to the terribly discouraging hereditary handicapping, another side to the undeniable lien that our ancestry has over us. We must drie our wierd, but we need not surrender the captaincy of our soul. . . .

Perhaps one is a little apt to forget that the hereditary relation is even-handed. It is for better as well as for worse. It secures the entailment of all manner of wholesome human qualities. Nay more, when we take a broad view, it is more than even-handed, for there is more likelihood of the hereditary entailment of the stable, the harmonious, and the integrative. The dice are loaded in our favour.[1]

2. Granted, then, that we had a little more of commandment-keeping running through our individual and our collective life, such an experience as physical want would become but a memory of a hideous past. This good old mother-earth can yield us, not only enough to go round, but enough to go round in generous abundance. Why is it that a few have so much more than they can use, and so many have less than they need? Do we think that God wills it? Can we conceive of it as having any part in the economy of the Kingdom which Jesus came to establish on the earth? It is not God but our selfishness that wills it; a selfishness that has its length of days and its malign power in the widespread folly and culpable ignorance that play into its hands.

[1] W. E. Gladstone.

[1] J. Arthur Thomson, *The Control of Life*, 117ff.

Think for a moment of the effects on society as a whole of the intemperate use of strong drink. They are incarnated in horrors, look where we will. The injuries which simply swarm out of our licensed temptations to drunkenness are not exceptional and irregular; they are, as one of the most eminent of our publicists has said, 'as uniform as the movements of the planets, and as deadly as the sirocco of the desert or the malaria of the marshes.' There is not a profession round which drink has not thrown the spell of its sorcery; scarcely a household that has not been despoiled by its leprous pollution. And who is responsible for it? Does anyone doubt that if the Christian Churches looked at this accursed traffic through the eyes of God, and attacked it with faith in His omnipotence, we could not break its back within the next ten years?

So long as we are content merely to run the eyes of our intelligence over the episodes of this great battle of wrong against right; to mark down its critical moments, and to analyse its issues while careful above all things not to implicate ourselves in the agonies of its crises, let us not challenge the faithfulness of God for wrongs and sorrows brought into the world and kept here by our selfishness. Those of us who have part or lot in this selfishness—and most of us have—let us, at any rate, play the game, and accept our own responsibility. Let us remember that there are some things God cannot do for us, and yet leave us men. He cannot make a better world without the consent of our individual obedience and the co-operation of our will.. Let us face the truth, however it may smite us, the truth that wrong is in the world for this reason—that we permit it.

Lord, send us forth among Thy fields to work!
Shall we for words and names contending be,
Or lift our garments from the dust we see,
And all the noonday heat and burden shirk?
The fields are white for harvest, shall we stay
To find a bed of roses for the night,
And watch the far-off cloud that comes to sight,
Lest it should burst in showers upon our way?
Fling off, my soul, thy grasping self, and view
With generous ardour all thy brothers' need;
Fling off thy thoughts of golden ease, and weed
A corner of thy Master's vineyard too.
The harvest of the world is great indeed,
O Jesus! and the laborers are few.[1]

## Remember Pharaoh.

Deut. vii. 18.—'Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh.'

1. WHAT was it that the Lord did unto Pharaoh? To answer that fully, one must read the early chapters of the Book of Exodus; and indeed, we should all of us read those chapters at regular intervals. For, to say no more, there is no guidance for the future so good as the deep and religious understanding of past events. Well, what God did to Pharaoh was just this: He defeated Pharaoh; He overthrew Pharaoh; He so dealt with Pharaoh that Pharaoh was not permitted to hinder God's people from doing what God was asking them to do. What God did to Pharaoh was virtually to remove Pharaoh, in so far as he was an obstacle to God's holy purpose.

(1) And here God is asking His people to recall that great time in their history; He is asking them to go over it all again in their imagination; to recall first the plagues that came upon Pharaoh, until his life seemed accursed to himself—all because he was trying to fight against God and to fight against the soul of a people who had it in them to be a great people; to recall how, so long as Pharaoh opposed God, his country fell into one trouble after another—the crops failed, the water became polluted, the best manhood of the nation sickened and died, until life in Egypt became insupportable, and Pharaoh himself besought God to take away His people; in fact, to do anything He wished to do. They are to read that chapter of their history until their heart, and all that is within them, is stirred up to bless and magnify the Lord.

(2) Then they are to go on to the next chapter and read of what God did to Pharaoh

[1] M. P. Lowe.

when Pharaoh repented of his own goodness and pursued the children of Israel to the shores of the Red Sea. They are to read and recall again the horror and anxiety of that night; how the rolling sea lay in their path, hindering them in front, and Pharaoh with the hosts of Egypt pressed upon them from behind; how everything seemed desperate, and the hope of years was ready to be struck out of their hearts for ever! Then they are to remember what the Lord their God did unto Pharaoh: how a cloud came between them and their pursuers; how the word of the Lord came to them to go forward. And they said: Forward? Forward into the sea? And the reply was: 'Yes, into the sea if need be, but forward!' And they went forward. And behold, there was no sea. And still forward and still no sea, until behold, they were on dry land on the other side. 'Then was their mouth filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing.'

(3) And then let the people of God remember what the Lord their God did unto Pharaoh; how Pharaoh followed them into the sea with his horsemen and his chariots; how for a moment it seemed as though he would overtake them, and how, suddenly, the Lord looked out from a cloud and troubled the hosts of Pharaoh; how the waters returned in their strength; how the wheels of the chariots sank to the axles in the sand, until from being a help they became an entanglement and a nuisance; how, suddenly, it dawned upon those embarrassed Egyptians that they were not fighting against men, but against God; and how, with that, they turned to flee. But it was too late. And in the morning 'Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.'

These are the things which the voice of God summons His people to recall, and to ponder, and to muse upon.

2. And now, for what purpose in particular did God ask His people to fill their hearts and minds with such tremendous recollections? For answer we need do nothing more than read the complete verse: 'Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh.' 'Thou shalt not be afraid of them.' Afraid of whom? Of the enemies of God. Who were the enemies of God in this case? They were the Hittites and the Hivites, the Canaanites and the rest.

But what significance have their names for us? They were the dwellers in the land. They were those whose natural habits were such that, so long as they remained, there was no moral safety for God's people. They stood for a low and dangerous view of life and of society. Their very presence was a kind of poison in the blood of the land. But they were very powerful. They had their roots in the country. Nay, they had their allies in the unregenerate hearts of men. It seemed, therefore, a hopeless task to unseat those enemies of the cause of God—so the people were beginning to think. And, in consequence, there was the danger that they would either sink to the level of their neighbours or make a compromise with their own ideals and with the spirit of their history. It was to men who were beginning to be afraid, not of the fascination of evil, but of the power and prestige of evil, that the voice of God spoke these words: 'Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh.' It was to men who, looking at their own small numbers and then at the hosts of the enemy, were beginning to lose confidence. It was to men who were being tempted in all manner of subtle ways to relax from the rigour of their own pure vision. It was to men who were beginning to shrink from doing what all the time they felt called upon to do. It was to men who were beginning to forget that where two or three are gathered together in God's name, there God is, and the power of God. It was to men who, —as in our own case so often—because of the apparent difficulties of any high course, were preparing to capitulate, to surrender to some lower view of personal life. It was, in short, to men who were beginning to forget that they were not alone in any matter in which they were yielding themselves to a higher will. It was to such men—it *is* to such men—and for the sake of such men, that these words were given, as they are now given to you again, thousands of years later in human history: 'Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh.' Remember anything which, even

for a moment, will bring you within the shadow of your ancient experience.

¶ Political apostates walk across our public stage to-day. This is the tragedy of their careers, that they have turned their backs upon the reforming ideals and the heroic schemes for social redemption which inspired and greatened them in their earlier days. They have lost faith in progress, in humanity, in high principles; they have turned back to Egypt, to the policy of expediency and opportunism, *using* popular passions for their own ends, prudentially making terms with the devil; their nadir is reached when they find a cowardly refuge in that distrust of human advancement against which their braver youth was a fiery revolt.

This is the Fall in one of its forms—when a spirit of general disbelief takes the place of the old ideals. And this is the grand victory of faith—when a man to the very last dares to hope and fight for the seeming impossibilities and takes a confident delight in the Christian conceptions of his best hours.[1]

Be strong! We are not here to play, to dream, to drift,
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift.
Shun not the struggle; face it;
'Tis God's gift. Be strong.

It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day how long.
Faint not, fight on!
To-morrow comes the song.[2]

## Fatal Attractions.

Deut. vii. 25.—'Thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them.'

The reference is to the idols which the nations worship. Now God has no quarrel with silver filigree or beaten gold. He is the Perfect Lover of the beautiful. But there is one thing that He loves still more than beauty, and that is the spiritual welfare of his children. And so in exquisite sympathy he cautions them, and summons them to a rigorous abstention, not because of hatred for the silver and the gold, but because of compassion for His sons.

1. Apply the principle to *literature*. Books are issued from the press to-day as redolent of what is base and bestial as any idol of the Canaanites. There are books that should never have been written, and there are books that should never be read. They soil the fingers by the very touch of them; and they do more than that, they soil the feelings. They tamper lightly with those eternal verities which alone keep life from being dust and ashes. They drag into the light those hidden things which God in his large silences has shrouded. Now, if such books were always poor productions, our text would not apply to them at all. No one would read them or ever want to read them. They would be tossed aside contemptuously. But the very peril of such books is this, that sometimes, like the idols of antiquity, they are adorned with filigree of silver and made beautiful with beaten work of gold. How light and delicate the writer's touch—how exquisite the literary style. What clever suggestion of a present heaven amid the passion and excess of hell. And it is when a man who loves all that is beautiful finds himself drawn by these delightful qualities, that his conscience and his God begin to cry to him, 'Thou shalt not desire their silver or their gold.'

¶ We cannot afford to speculate on doubtful literature. Perhaps all of us would acknowledge that we have read papers and books that we wish we had not read. How true, and awfully true, are the words of one who said, 'The burning touch of that lascivious imagination which has spoken to you for a few hours will not pass away when you dash down the book. It has made a blister and left a cicatrice which nothing can heal. The things of which you have been told, the words of passion hissed into your ear as if by the hot breath of a clever, wicked man or woman, do not die away. They are forgotten for a time, but you will hear them again. You will never be sure to be rid of them until you are in that quiet place where the ear is filled with dust and the eyes with

[1] R. E. Welsh. *Man to Man*, 215.
[2] Maltbie D. Babcock.

darkness. There are hearts amongst us ulcerated or broken by sinful passions. There are souls tried with awful temptations. There are natures corroded with hateful thoughts that seem to have been injected into every pore of the moral being. I am convinced that all might be traced back to a wicked play, to a wicked novel, a wicked poem.' [1]

2. The same great principle applies to *our callings*. Every young man should keep it clear before him when he is thinking of what his calling is to be. In the expansion of our modern life the range of possible callings is amazing. Every new discovery or invention means the opening of new careers. Now in all that multiplicity of labour it is very difficult to make distinctions. It is not easy to say *this* is right and *that* is wrong. But none the less in every great community there are always callings dubious and questionable, which are not easy to reconcile with a sensitive and an honourable heart. Now if such callings were lean and hungry things our text would not apply to them at all. But how often their very charm is this, that they seem by an easy way to promise riches. And so God comes to us, as to the Israelites tempted by the adorning of idols, and says in a love that seeks our very highest 'Thou shalt not desire their silver or their gold.'

¶ Success bought at the price of character, wealth made by chicanery or by ruthless exploitation of human lives, property gained by anti-social methods are intrinsically evil. Their yield is bitter fruit—they do not make a life; they mar it. In making money a man may unmake himself, and add immeasurably to the sum of human misery.

As long ago as Ancient Rome men said to their sons: 'Make money honestly if you can; but if not, by any means and every means make money.' This devil's doctrine has persisted through the centuries, and has nourished distorted ambition in every age and land. The idea that wealth is a sure avenue to happiness has lured men like a siren's song to the ruin of all that is worth cherishing in life.

Mr. B. Paul Neuman, in one of his character novels, presents a highly finished study of the processes of fortune-making. His hero, Paul Dominy, a young foreign Jew, left an orphan in New York, and brought up by a Polish family, is given the choice of being educated as a musician—music is his chiefest joy—or being trained for business. He selects business, and a passion to be wealthy soon devours his soul, and overwhelms it. By one coup after another, Dominy amasses riches beyond the dreams of avarice. His millions become a burden to him; but the zeal for dollar-making has him enslaved. A girl he loves will not marry him to divide his love between her and his money, and in this great alternative he thrusts aside love in the quest for gold. A child-lover, he is childless, and children who were once attracted to him are repelled by a mysterious repugnancy. Illness assails him, and loneliness depresses him. The end is tragedy—depression, drugs, desperation, suicide. The profitlessness of a man gaining the whole world and losing his own soul is driven home by Mr. Neuman's novel.[1]

3. The principle is needful when we are tempted to explore what *life* is. Men fling themselves into life, as they express it, for the sake of the enrichment which it brings. When Eve was tempted in her Orient paradise, it was not the apple that was her real temptation. The fierce temptation for her woman's heart lay in the freedom that was behind the fruit; in the enrichment and enlargement of her being which the eating of it was to bring. To her the apple in itself was nothing. To her the enrichment that it brought was everything. She craved expansion in her restricted paradise, and she would have it although she disobeyed. And we are often tempted, just as Eve was tempted, in the craving for a larger, fuller life, to break the bounds that God has set around us. It is not the idol that we really want; it is the gold and silver on the idol. It is the new experience, the fresh sensation, the life that is fuller than our dreary round. And so we are tempted from the line of duty on to those dubious or forbidden paths whose end is always emptiness and tears.

[1] Samuel Marriott, *On Playing the Game*, 82.

[1] Arthur Porritt, *The Strategy of Life*, 2.

¶ In his recent book, *Life Changers,* Harold Begbie thus describes the effect of the lure of the city on the soul of a young freshman. 'His battle began in his first term at college. He went to Yale, which is in Newhaven, and for the first time in his life breathed the atmosphere of a town which had the flavour of a great city. All the placid provincialism of the little country town in which he had dreamed and mused away the years of boyhood was consumed in the rakish gaiety of this University town. A walk down Chapel Street was enough to set his head spinning. This street, with its fashionable shops, its numerous theatres, and its cosmopolitan restaurants, is a favourite parade for harlots and 'adventure girls'—pretty girls from the chorus of comic operas, and girls of the town whose moral standards are on the same level as their standards in manners, literature, and art. The effect it makes on a provincial is one of rebuke; he is persuaded to feel that he is narrow, dull, wanting in spirit, a prisoner to fear, a captive of stupidity. The bright people smiling and laughing in the sunshine of that cheerful thoroughfare seem to flaunt a superior liberty and a higher courage in the dazed eyes of the youthful provincial. They are not the victims of illusion; it is he, gaping at them, who is deceived. They are not going down to perdition; but he wanting to join, and yet afraid, is on the road to mediocrity.

Nothing in the religion of this boy was proof against the temptations of Chapel Street. For the first time in his life he experienced an uprush of those feelings which are so powerful to create the highest happiness of the human soul, so powerful to destroy the last rags of its liberty and self-respect. He was tempted, and the temptation seemed to foul his spirit. He could not withstand the call of apparent beauty and apparent gladness.'[1]

4. And then we should apply our text to the all-important matter of *our friendships.* For a friendship may play havoc with our life, or it may bring it to the very gates of heaven To have a true friend is to have hidden treasure. It is as water in a weary land. But to have a friend whose character proves worthless is one of the bitterest of life's revealings. And yet how often a worthless character, like the graven idols of the Canaanites, is beautiful with silver and with gold. Men may be very clever and yet vile. Men may be very brilliant and very false. Men may be utterly untrustworthy, and yet the most delightful of companions. And it is when attracted by such charms as these in a character radically false and vicious that the command still rings upon the ear—'Thou shalt not desire their silver or their gold.'

¶ Among writers of hymns there is no name that calls up before us a more fascinating picture than that of John Newton. Yet John Newton wasted the very best years of his early manhood. How? As a boy he became through his father's influence midshipman on board a man-of-war. In later years referring to this period of his life he said: 'I here met with companions who completed the ruin of my principles. My delight and habitual practice was wickedness. My chief intimate was a person of exceeding good natural talents, the greatest master of what is called the free-thinking scheme I remember to have met with, and he knew how to insinuate his sentiments in the most plausible way.'

John Newton, with such companionships, went down to the lowest depths. 'I know not,' he said subsequently, 'that I have ever since met so daring a blasphemer as I was.' And again: 'Stealing was almost the only vice I could not be justly charged with.' Those depraved years he could never forget. Though rescued and saved at last, he had their mark upon him always.

Have you never heard something like this concerning some possible intimate: 'Well, you know, he is not exactly what you may call religious. In fact, he never goes to church, and he is, indeed, rather sceptical. But then, he is a charming fellow,' and so forth? Yes! and if you don't take care, he will charm you to the devil!

I want to say in the plainest possible fashion that no man or woman is worthy to be your friend who is indifferent to the religion of Jesus, who is worldly, flippant, heedless of

[1] P. 107.

the highest things, whatever other admirable features they may chance to possess; and that if with any such person you form an alliance, you do it at your peril, and with the almost certain loss of the things that are best worth having.[1]

## All the Way.

Deut. viii. 2.—'Thou shalt remember all the way.'

Moses charged the people to look back and set the past in relation to God. He emphasized three things in their past history—first, that it began by God's deliverance of them from bondage; secondly, that it was characterized in its continuity by the perpetual and persistent guidance of God; thirdly, and finally, that out of the infinite resources of God every need had been met.

1. He charged them as they looked back to observe that their history was founded in redemption. He charged them to remember that the Lord had led them out of Egypt and out of bondage, that He had brought them to Himself and to freedom. This idea is fundamental. We find it running through all the Old Testament, through the songs of the Psalmists, the messages of the seers, the uttering of truth by the prophets.

And when we turn to the New, we find exactly the same idea running through all the Apostolic writings and exhortations. Christian men are forever reminded that the life of faith begins in the redeeming activity of God, that by Divine emancipation men are brought into largeness of being, individually, socially and nationally. This is the perpetual cry of the New Testament writer: 'He hath loosed us from our sins.' Every appeal to character and conduct is based upon the fact of original emancipation. Or if the New Testament writer is appealing to us with reference to social conditions in the home, the city, or the State, the appeal is always based upon the self-same fact. Take one illustration, simplest, most familiar and most powerful: 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.' That is the sanctification of home, by the relation of those who make home to the ransom and redemption of the Cross.

2. And Moses reminded these people, in the second place, not only that their history was founded upon ransom, but also that God had led them. He never hides the fact that it had been a hard way. He speaks of the wilderness as a 'great and terrible wilderness,' but he tells them—and there is the thing of value—that through all their wanderings they were God-led. He declares that as they marched those weary counter-marches, apparently almost at haphazard, every night God moved before them to choose a place in which they should pitch their tent. And that is not the deepest note. He charged them to remember that God accompanied them, and that their marching was always to purpose. He declared to them in fact that God led them back in order that they might go forward; circuitously, in order that they might go straight; through terror in order that they might reach triumph. We also are compelled to say, if we are honest, our God has led us hitherto. The ways have been foreordained in which we have had to walk. There has been grace in every time of need. All things have wrought together for good to those who have put their trust in God. To quote a hackneyed expression, which is nevertheless true, 'disappointment has been appointment.' And so through all the years God has led us.

3. He charged them to remember that God's resources had been at their disposal. He told them that their bread had been given them, that their water had been provided, that their raiment had been sure. He might have spoken of many other gifts of God, but he confined himself in this great argument and appeal to the remembrance of the things that were absolutely necessary. He said to them at the close of the forty years, 'Have you lacked anything that has been necessary?' or rather he said, 'Remember that you have lacked nothing that has been necessary.'

Has God ever left us without that which has been necessary? Ah! we have desired

[1] J. Flew, *Saints of Yesterday*, 83.

many things that we never had, but did we need them? We thought the supply must surely fail at the last extremity, but did it? Looking back over life's way many in their deepest soul can say, 'The thing I earnestly desired and clamoured for and prayed for God denied, and I thank Him for the denial. Out of the dark day came the brightest light; out of the loneliness came the sweetest comradeship; out of the mystery of pain came the abiding pleasure, and God has met all need.'

Mercies new and never-failing
Brightly shine through all the past,
Watchful care and lovingkindness
Always near from first to last,
Tender love, divine protection
Ever with us day and night;
Blessings more than we can number
Strow the path with golden light.

Shadows deep have crossed our pathway;
We have trembled in the storm;
Clouds have gathered round so darkly
That we could not see Thy form:
Yet Thy love hath never left us
In our griefs alone to be,
And the help each gave the other
Was the strength that came from Thee.

## Remember and Do.

Deut. viii. 2.—'Thou shalt remember all the way.'

As a traveller, when he reaches the summit of a hill, will pause and look back at the valley through which he has wearily toiled, so it is well for us at times to cast a retrospective glance over the part of life's road which we have traversed. It is well for us to remember all the way by which our God has led us these many years in the wilderness.

1. Let us remember it and *repent*. For it is impossible to review the past without sorrow and regret; we have done so much that was evil, and so little that was good; we have misspent so much of our time, made such a poor use of our opportunities, fulfilled our duties so perfunctorily. There were a thousand kind things we might have done, but we did not do them; a thousand kind words we might have spoken, but we did not speak them; and when we think of all our omissions and our failures, 'our heart goes sorrowing back through all the faultful past.'

How many a one in futile pain hath willed
To call again some word that leaped and killed!
How many a one shall hear by night and day,
Sounding his doom, some word he did not say![1]

2. Let us remember it and *be grateful*. 'A remembered past,' it has been said, 'has treasures in it we cannot afford to lose.' Think of the mercies of the way, of the unfailing supplies of the way, of the answered prayers of the way, of the unceasing stream of goodness that has all along run parallel with the way, of the escaped dangers of the way. 'As I grow older,' said Dr. Dale, 'I think more and more of the perils of living.' Ay, 'the perils of living' are many and grave, yet we have so far survived them all! Let us remember this and be grateful.

¶ No one who has read Stevenson's *Memoir of Fleeming Jenkin* can ever forget the charming picture of the last days of the Professor's father, Captain Jenkin. One of his last pleasures was to arrange his dining-room. Many and many a room (in their wandering and thriftless existence) had he seen his wife furnish 'with exquisite taste' and perhaps with 'considerable luxury'; now it was his turn to be the decorator. On the wall he had an engraving of Lord Rodney's action, showing the *Prothée*, his father's ship, if the reader recollects; on either side of this, on brackets, his father's sword, and his father's telescope, a gift from Admiral Buckner, who had used it himself during the engagement; higher yet, the head of his grandson's first stag, portraits of his son and his son's wife, and a couple of old Windsor jugs from Mrs. Buckner's. But his simple trophy was not yet complete; a device had to be worked and framed and hung below the engraving; and for this he applied to his daughter-in-law: 'I want you to work me something, Annie. An

[1] Frederick Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 33.

anchor at each side, and in the middle THANKFUL.'

3. Let us remember it and *be confident.* After so many years of God's love, we cannot surely doubt it any more. He has not brought us thus far, ever to forsake us. Through that part of the wilderness that still lies before us He will be with us, as He has been in that part that now lies behind us for ever. And in the last cold stream He will still be our Companion and our Stay.

Looking back along life's trodden way,
Gleams and greenness linger on the track;
Distance melts and mellows all to-day,
Looking back.

Rose and purple and a silvery grey,
Is that cloud the cloud we called so black?
Evening harmonizes all to-day,
Looking back.

Foolish feet so prone to halt or stray,
Foolish heart so restive on the rack!
Yesterday we sighed, but not to-day,
Looking back.[1]

## Tests of God's Guidance.

Deut. viii. 2.—'The way which the Lord thy God led thee.'

How may we recognize the Divine guidance in the common affairs of our everyday life? There are times, as we all know, when the mind oscillates and vacillates between one course and another, when the motives to action seem almost equally balanced. Ought we to do this or to do that? Ought we to stay here or go there? Ought we to speak or to keep silence? Ought we to share in such and such a work, to participate in such and such a movement, or is it our duty to keep out of it? What line are we meant to take? Which path are we meant to follow? It is very difficult to determine. We pray, perhaps, that we may be guided to a right decision. But how are we to know which of the motives that have weight with us are set in operation by God? How are we to distinguish the Divine leadings and incentives from our own ideas and imaginations? Is there, in short, any test of Divine guidance, any method by which we may convince ourselves that in pursuing a certain course we are really and truly conforming to a supernatural prompting and direction?

To discern the Divine guidance, there are at least three tests.

1. The first is the *test of the open door.*—Suddenly, perhaps, some door which was hitherto closed is flung wide open; some path which has always been blocked is made clear before my face; some obstacle which has barred my progress in some definite direction is removed out of the way. I receive an invitation, perhaps, from an unexpected quarter. I am offered some piece of work which undoubtedly ought to be done, but for which no one except myself appears to be available. An opportunity for service or self-sacrifice presents itself. In the wall that surrounds my life a door is mysteriously opened by an unseen hand and I am free, if I will, to go in and go through to new spheres and new experiences. Now what am I to think? May I not believe that the opener of that door is really God? Am I not entitled to assume that, through and by means of that disclosure of possibilities, God is calling me into action? Do I find anywhere in my vicinity an open door? Then surely the door so surprisingly thrown open to me is a sign that my path lies there, and that, in taking that path and no other, I shall be obeying the Divine guidance and following the way of the Divine will and pleasure.

¶ God is the author of the open door. He does not build a dead wall across any man's path, but a door, and He holds and keeps it open. In the Revelation, it says, 'I have set before thee a door opened.' That is true for every life. God is ever calling us to something better. He is not trying to keep us down, to hold us back, to make us unhappy, to brand us with failure. He is the God of the open door, the divinity of opportunity.

He is this for every man. One may doubt or deny it. He may say: 'There is no chance

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

for me. Circumstances are against me. I am doomed.' Let him open his eyes and Look ahead, for there is every chance for him. At the next turn of the road he will come to the open door. Somewhere it exists for him and, if he will but listen, even now he may hear the voices of an invisible choir, chanting the call of destiny.[1]

2. The second is the *test of the teaching of the scriptures.*—In all cases of practical difficulty I should be well advised to ask myself, Has the Bible any light to throw on this perplexity? Have the men who wrote the Bible any message to deliver to me out of their own sanctified experience? Does God offer me any leading on this matter through His Word? Let me turn to the Bible. Let me consult the Bible. Let me see if I can discover any illumination in the Bible. And if I find, as I often do find, some passage in the Bible that bears closely on my difficulty, then I may feel pretty safe in obeying the direction of that passage. God is pointing out my way through that passage of the Bible. There, I may be sure, I shall discover what God's will is. There I shall learn what God wishes me to say or do. There, if nowhere else, I shall find what I am looking for—the clear tokens of Divine guidance.

¶ Augustine realized that he must make his choice once for all between the importunate desires of the flesh and the promptings of the spirit. So he hesitated, in an agony of irresolution: 'this way and that dividing the swift mind.' He quailed at the thought of 'dying unto death and living unto life.' The old Adam plucked at his garment: the old vanities whispered 'Can you let us go? From that instant we shall see you no more for ever—for ever!' 'But,' says Augustine, 'in that quarter towards which I had set my face, there dawned on me the chaste dignity of continence modestly alluring me, stretching out kindly hands to welcome me—hands full of good examples: smiling upon me as one who should say, Canst thou not do what these have done? Was it of themselves that they were enabled, and not rather of the Lord their God? . . . Cast thyself boldly on Him: fear not; He will not withdraw Himself and let thee fall. He will sustain thee and heal thee.'

The sequel is familiar to us all. The scene of his agony, a garden (*hortulus*); his sole companion Alypius, who stood watching him in silence. Presently he breaks away from his friend, and finding a solitary corner of the garden flings himself down under a fig tree and bursts into a passion of weeping. 'How long, how long!' he wails. 'To-morrow and to-morrow! Why not now? Why not in this very hour make an end of my vileness?' Suddenly he hears the voice of a child singing *Tolle, lege; tolle, lege.* It seems to him a voice from heaven bidding him 'take up' the sacred volume and read the first passage that might catch his eye; such, he had been told, was the custom of Antony in moments of perplexity. Acting on the impulse he ran back to Alypius, caught up the book lying beside him, opened it and read in silence the words, 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' As he reached the end of the sentence 'the light of peace seemed to be shed' upon his heart; his doubts melted away. Closing the book he calmly told his friend what had happened. Alypius asked to see the text of St. Paul, and pointed to the following verse which seemed to apply specially to his own case: 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.' At once, with less emotional disturbance but with equal steadfastness of purpose, he cast in his lot with Augustine. Together they sought Monnica and told her of their experience.[1]

3. The third test is the *test of the harder way.*—You are doubtless familiar with the story of the last hours of the life of Socrates. When the philosopher lay in prison awaiting his execution, a plan of escape was proposed to him. Preparations had been made for smuggling him out of Athens. He might easily have fled, and settled down in

[1] J. I. Vance, *Tendency*, 122.

[1] R. L. Ottley, *Studies in the Confessions of St. Augustine*, 32.

another city, and lived there a life of usefulness, persuading other men, as he had tried to persuade the Athenians, to think truth and practise virtue. The affair could have been managed. Two ways at the moment were open to him—the easier way of life and the harder way of death—and he had to make his choice between them. And Socrates chose, without an instant's hesitation, the harder way. He felt instinctively that it was God's way. He knew that almost always God's way is the harder way. 'Leave me,' he said to his friends, 'to follow whithersoever God leads.' And what the heathen philosopher knew so well the Christian believer knows yet more certainly—that they who seek the Divine guidance will find it almost always along the harder way. Remember who it is that guides.

Hath He marks to lead me to Him,
If He be my Guide?
In His feet and hands are wound-prints,
And His side!

And the path along which He elects to guide is 'the royal highway of the holy Cross.' If, therefore, two roads lie open, of which one is pleasant and easy and the other painful and difficult, we shall do well—unless there be very clear and irresistible arguments to the contrary—to steel our heart and summon all our resolution and strike out bravely on the harder way. When we can honestly say that along such and such a path we are denying ourselves and following Christ, when we can honestly say that along such and such a path we are carrying a cross after Christ, then we need not be afraid of having wandered or gone astray. It is all right. There is no mistake. We are on the appointed road. We are moving in the true direction. The Shepherd goes before, along the Via Dolorosa, and thither 'He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.' It is all right. There is no mistake. The harder way, the Calvary way—that is unquestionably the allotted way, that is unquestionably the way of the Divine Guidance.

## Hunger.

Deut. viii. 3.—'He . . . suffered thee to hunger.'

THERE are many ways of experiencing that unsatisfied longing which men call hunger, and strange must be his case who has not passed through some of them.

Have you seen a lame lad looking on as his sturdier brothers and sisters ran and shouted in their glee? Did you mark the wistful look on his poor, pale, little face as he wished he could run too? God was suffering him to hunger. Have you seen a poor, tired, overwrought, overstrained woman toiling on from morning to night with no respite, and but little reward for her toil? Perchance her memory recalls days of comfort and refinement, while now her tired fingers and aching brow long for nothing so much as rest. God is suffering her to hunger. Have you stood by an open grave, and there left the dearest and most precious treasure you possessed? Do you know what it is when the whole world feels a void, and the most populous place an empty desert; when joy is unbearable, the glad sunshine a mockery, and the song of the birds worse than a dirge? Have you ever said with Burns—

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How *can* ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How *can* ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, fu' o' care?

Then, indeed, God has suffered you to hunger.

Now let us remember that starvation is neither God's will nor God's work. Here we are face to face with the fundamental problem of the origin of evil. And a problem it must remain. To hold, as many of us do hold most strongly, that the devil is the author of evil, and that to him is to be traced every evil in the universe, is possibly to throw light on some of the side issues of the question, but brings us no nearer the ultimate answer. We are not so foolish as to attempt to solve what has baffled the world's keenest intellects in every age. Very probably to us men, and in our present stage of existence, the answer is impossible. When we have fathomed the mys-

teries of the most familiar things of everyday life, we may venture to explore these more recondite subjects; but so far are we from understanding the tiniest atom, that one of the declarations of modern science is that 'an ultimate explanation of the simplest fact remains, apparently for ever, unattainable.'

While, however, the origin of evil must remain a mystery, it is abundantly evident, not only that evil is here, but that God often takes it into the scheme of His providence, and makes it serve beneficent ends. The glory of Christianity is, not that it in this life annihilates night, but that it gives songs in the night season. So that the question may reasonably be asked, 'Why does God suffer us to hunger?' And it is capable of an answer, which, though not exhaustive, may yet be helpful and so far as it goes, perfectly true. Let us glance, then, at some of the ways in which God uses hunger.

1. First of all there is *judgment*. The varied, unsatisfied longings of human nature—physical, mental, moral—which come under the denomination of hunger, have again and again been used of God for the direct punishment of sin. The very chapter from which our text is taken declares that if Israel will not fear God and keep His commandments, Israel shall serve his enemies in hunger. And it is very often not difficult to trace a natural connection, as of cause and effect, between sin and its punishment. So it is written, 'An idle soul shall suffer hunger.' How many have found it so! There are parents to-day, weeping bitter tears over boys and girls gone wrong, who, years ago, never recognized that only by ceaseless care, unwearied patience, and a wisdom born from above can parents guide their children into the way of peace. They hoped things would come right 'somehow,' and to-day, when instead of coming right they have gone wrong, these parents blame the Church and the Sunday-school, anybody and everybody, while in many cases it is to be feared the terrible truth is that the idle soul is suffering hunger.

¶ Temptations were present in Arthur's young life as in the experience of other boys. . . . The city streets were full of vice and traps, and he was full of life and curiosity and self-confidence. Companions were ever ready to lead him into forbidden paths. Worse than this, many summers were spent away from his family in the country, where, all unknown to his parents, he found a veritable Sodom. It was, as he said, only the prayers of his father and mother, their example and early training and the overshadowing mercy of God that prevented his young life from being blighted. Such experiences led the man in later years to emphasize, with burning earnestness, the duty of parents to safeguard the early moral and religious surroundings and habits of their children.[1]

2. Hunger is used by God for purposes of *discipline*. For hunger is the moment of temptation. Then is the devil's opportunity, then is the time of testing, then your chance to show your manhood, if you have any. It is the moment of weakness, and, of course, that is the natural time for the assault of the enemy. It was so in that mysterious, yet typical experience of our Lord. It was when He was hungry that the devil came to Him. Sometimes it is a temptation to allay hunger with bad food. The young man from the village where he knew everybody finds himself in the great city where he knows nobody. He is hungry for companionship. There is nothing wrong in that, it is a God-given instinct. Company he must have, and, not finding good companions, he yields himself to bad ones. Many a man has gone wrong like that. It is not that there was anything specially wicked about him, or that he went astray deliberately, but there was the natural pressure of a laudable but unsatisfied desire, and so, unable to find good food, he 'filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.' So true is it that hunger is the moment of temptation that, while it bids each of us take heed lest when we think we stand peradventure we fall, surely it also bids us take thought for the lonely ones, lest in solitude and weakness they stumble and are destroyed .

¶ 'My father used to say to me,' says Bram-

[1] D. L. Pierson, *Arthur T. Pierson*, 29.

well Booth, who at that time, conscious of the Army's watchful enemies, was perhaps a stricter disciplinarian than William Booth, 'whenever, for the good name of the Army, I wanted summarily to dismiss a bad officer, "Bramwell, you must not judge a man in that out-of-hand fashion. How do you know the force of the temptation to which he succumbed? Don't you see, some men are more tempted by a woman or by money than others? The temptation is greater, fiercer. It sweeps them off their feet.. It draws them down like a whirlpool. And perhaps they repent afterwards, as the less-tempted man never repents."'[1]

3. Once again, God uses hunger as a *stimulus*. It is hunger that makes us eat, that spurs us on to take that sustenance without which we faint and die. So was it when God brought Israel out of Egypt. God wanted them to have ideals, but they didn't want ideals, they wanted leeks and onions. And so they had to be smitten till, hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then when they were hungry, 'they cried unto the Lord in their trouble.' When will men realize that God is really their Father, that He has a Father's heart, and wants His children's love, and not merely His subject's homage? He wants His children to talk to Him, but they are so occupied with their toys that He is forced, as it were, to take these away sometimes, that the sons and daughters of the Most High may come to their Heavenly Parent. God wants to give us good things, but our hands are too full to receive them, and the hands have to be emptied. Oh, blessed are they that hunger, for 'He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.'

¶ We live by disappointment as well as by attainment. Nay, in our disappointments we can gain finer attainments. The cloudless skies make a Sahara. It is the strangely mingled weather, with its dullness and cold, searching mists and rains, which makes 'England's green and pleasant land.' We cannot live by success alone. Success alone would make us hard and dry. We need the softening ministry of disappointment. We need the enlarging ministry of failure. We need the mysterious tonic of defeat.[1]

[1] H. Begbie, *Life of William Booth*, ii. 134.

## The Bread of God.

Deut. viii. 3.—'Man doth not live by bread only.'

If you refer to the entire passage you will see that this beautiful truth appears to be presented in the form of a paradox. Moses, in his farewell address, reminds his people of their life in the wilderness during the forty years now drawing to a close. Those years have been essentially a period of trial. 'God humbled thee,' the Lawgiver says to his flock, 'and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.' It seems a strange method of teaching this sublime truth. At first sight it would appear that if the manna taught one lesson more than another, it was the imperative need of bread. The cravings of the Israelites called for food, and God Himself had recognized the imperiousness of the need by raining bread from heaven to satisfy it.

But the apparent self-contradiction vanishes when we look at the matter a little more closely. What was this manna with which the people were fed? If their own complaints are to be trusted, it was eminently an unsatisfying bread. In their moments of unbelief they would rail at it as insipid and unsustaining; they would cry out for more attractive, more stimulating food; they would lust after the flesh-pots of Egypt. They ate the manna, and yet were hungry. Nay, they were not sure that even the manna would always be theirs. In the most literal sense they were living on the daily bounty of God. But that bounty might be, of a sudden, withheld. The bread fell from heaven every day; but one day heaven might be shut up, and the rain of bread cease. So, to the unsatisfying nature of the

[1] J. H. Jowett.

manna was added the uncertainty of its continuance.

What more impressive means could have been chosen for teaching the Israelites that there is something better than bread, something more needful for man, something upon which he may more worthily fix his thoughts and his desires, and in attaining which he finds the elements of his true life? For this bread that satisfied them not let them substitute the spiritual food which never permits those that taste it to hunger—the word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. Let obedience to that word be their hearts' supreme desire; for 'by these things men live, and wholly therein is the life of the spirit.' Nay, we may go a step further and say that this food which fell mysteriously from heaven, and which vanished as mysteriously when the sun was hot—this food so delicate, so ethereal, was itself the very type of the heavenly bread for which man has chiefly to long because it feeds his higher self, his soul.

Men live not by the earthly bread
  For which their hands have striven:
By higher Powers their souls are fed,
  To higher quests are driven;

Yet by no strange untrodden Way
  They win the Bread above;
Heaven's Bread descendeth: God doth stay
  On lowly paths of love.[1]

1. And this is the lesson we too may learn. It is the supreme lesson of life. 'Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.' The words are familiar enough, and we all applaud their beauty. But, while we cherish them in our hearts, we choose our way in life as though we had never heard them. If they were to become the world's motto, men would have to revolutionize all their aims, all their ideals, all their modes of living. Now men are living as though bread and all it stands for—the sustaining of the lower self—were the one desirable thing; whereas then they would live only to nourish and develop their higher, their true selves. Now they are dominated by a base hunger—a hunger for riches, for luxury, for sensual joys—a hunger which they will often sacrifice their integrity to appease, and which nothing can still save the hand of death; whereas then there would be a universal famine, 'not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord'—an unquenchable desire to measure human duty in all its height and breadth and depth, and to make life a faithful reflection of that larger knowledge. Now men are existing; whereas then they would live. Casting away their idols they would turn to God with one consent, and, turning to Him thus, draw nearer in unselfishness and loving-kindness to their fellow-men.

2. The text summons us to exchange the false for the true. It is a summons worth obeying; for what it calls us to is the life that alone brings dignity to man, that alone brings him satisfaction. For where is dignity to be found? Is it in the restless hunt after lower joys? Is it not rather in the unceasing effort to crush out every ignoble yearning from our breasts, to give full play to our higher instincts, to keep spotless and undefiled that glorious image of God in which we have been created? Is it to be found in jostling and tripping up our fellows in the struggle for the world's prizes? Does it not lie rather in extending to all that are weak and sorrowful a hand that helps and consoles—a hand like unto that of God Himself, filled with mercy and blessing? Where is true happiness to be found? Is it in gaiety or dissipation? Does it consist in a big balance at one's bank, the ownership of broad acres, the possession of a title? A man may have any or all of these, and yet be utterly miserable. He may have none of them, and be a fit object for a king's envy. No; true happiness is possessed only by those who, whether they be rich or poor, have sweet peace in their hearts—peace that springs from a conscience at rest—by those who are ever striving to be true to the best that is in them, those who 'go,' day after day, in the moral sense, 'from strength to strength,' those

[1] Grace Warrack, *From Isles of the West to Bethlehem*, 15.

who are ever climbing slowly up to God, ever drawing nearer to

That perfect presence of His face
Which we, for want of words, call Heaven.

3. The distinctive characteristic of this happiness is that it is inalienable; no power, no vicissitude can deprive us of it. The joy that springs from the thought of being near in noble aspiration to God, of being near in loving deeds to our fellow-men, is a joy which no trouble, no reverse of worldly fortune, can weaken. On the contrary, the darker the world grows about us, the brighter becomes the light shining in the heavens; the more hollow the desirable things of life are proved to be, the more welcome becomes the gladness of the soul that is at peace with itself. Sorrow, pain of body or of mind, even that most cruel of all miseries—the ingratitude of those we have trusted and loved—all are robbed of their worst sting by this inner, this invincible tranquillity. Not even the shortness of life can sadden us; for it is only the false life that is short. The true life is full, and therefore long; and the true life is ours. It is not a fleeting shadow, but the most glorious of realities. It is not a period of seventy short years, it is an eternity; for by its achievements infinite heaven itself is won.

¶ If Belgium had yielded to the demands made upon her at the outbreak of war, her territories would doubtless have remained unravaged, her ancient cities and temples undestroyed. She would presumably have lost her independence, and experienced some of the disadvantages and indignities of subjection, if Germany had proved victorious; but her oppression need not have been inconsistent with material prosperity. Belgium refused to concede the insolent and unrighteous demands made upon her, choosing rather to suffer affliction with those whom in this cause we may dare to call the people of God. Her people counted the love of country dearer than the love of self, counted liberty and independence and honour dearer than peace and prosperity with dishonour. And the glory of it is that these things for which Belgium has bled and fought and suffered are immaterial, not bread, or anything comparable to bread. This thought surely inspired that cartoon of *Punch* which depicts the Kaiser and King Albert standing together against a background of desolation, of smoking ruins and homeless fugitives: 'So, you see,' remarks the Kaiser, 'you've lost everything.' And the King of the Belgians answers with dauntless lips, 'Not my soul.' [1]

## Harvest Thanksgiving.

Deut. viii. 7.—'The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land.'

THE one great promise which for hundreds of years was held out to the sons of Abraham, the one great reward that for many hundred years bore witness of God's glory, and of their being the people of God, was this land of plenty, this land of corn, and wine, and oil. There it spread out before their eyes, generation after generation, a very book of God, God's handwriting—their heaven, for was it not the fulfilment of the promise?—their Bible, for was not God's voice ever speaking from it? And that voice was ever telling them of nations who had been cast out of the land because of their lust; telling them that they too would be cast out if the land they had conquered became their conqueror, and the corn and the wine ran riot in their veins, and mastered them, and enslaved them to sin.

Mark how the lesson had been early taught them. In Egypt, full-fed and hard-worked, their only pleasure eating and drinking, the slave's whip ever at their backs, they had known what base self-indulgence meant, and the bitterness of it; but, when they were brought into the wilderness by God's hand, the mean-spirited and greedy among them, the slaves of their belly, soon showed how unfit they were to be led into a land of corn and wine, flowing with milk and honey. Preferring the flesh-pots and the whip to being free and the warriors of God, they murmured and rebelled, ready to give up the great promise for another onion in the pot. And it was not

[1] J. Muir, *War and Christian Duty*, 62.

till these miserable slaves of food had all been killed off, and another generation had grown up in the hardy habits of the wilderness, that the nation was fitted to take possession of the land of Canaan, was able to live there in the midst of its plenty, uncorrupted by it.

But this was God's will. It is God's will in every age. It is God's will for us. He gives us plenty, He bids us rejoice in His plenty. He bids us, when we have eaten and are full, bless the Lord for the good land that He has given us. But He kills, yes—kills as pitilessly as He did the rebellious mob in the wilderness, the drunkards, and the gluttons, the whoremongers, and the whores, who give way to their appetites and cannot be conquerors in food and pleasure. Everybody knows it as a fact, but few take it to heart, that the bloated body is God's visible judgment bringing death; and the drunkard's face a kind of handwriting of God; and the ruined home the verdict of a heavenly assize; and the dishonoured grave an execution of the criminal by God's secret ministers of vengeance. We must be conquerors in the good land of plenty, for the conquered perish, slain by God as unworthy of His gifts.

¶ In this sixth cornice the coarse sin of gluttony or love of appetite is chastened. The souls, with their lean and starved appearance, suffer from hunger and thirst, standing beneath the branches of a tree laden with fruit, longing, like children, to eat: the eager appetite remains, but in this region of discipline it cannot be satisfied. There is another tree—the tree of temperance: a tree whose fruit is hard to reach—hard to find pleasure in—yet the tree of frugal fare is the tree of life to such men: simple food and clear water may be sweet as the richest banquet. For such sinners these two trees have been prepared: the first which bears the fruit of temperance; the second which bears fruit that appeals to gluttonous desire; the first of which men eat for strength; the second for appetite. So the sixth cornice is passed, which shows love grown gross through over-indulgence of bodily desire. The benediction with which the pilgrims are dismissed tells that through discipline desire has been restored within its proper bounds by the awakening of the nobler hunger—'Blessed are they that hunger,' says the heavenly voice; and we know that the hunger is for righteousness, and that the love of what is high has expelled the love of what is low.[1]

But the gifts are glorious and blessed. They are nothing less than the promise of Abraham fulfilled for the sons of Abraham. They are nothing less than the whole land, proclaiming over all its length and breadth of cornfields and grass the glory and goodness of God. They are nothing less than the corn and the wine throwing their great mantle of sacramental grace over hill and valley, and turning the wide plain and the harvest field into a sacrament, a very portion of the Last Supper of the Lord. Let us then rejoice with the joy of conquerors for the good land and the plentiful harvest. God means us to rejoice. Let us lift up our hearts and take the good gifts of the land that God has blessed.

Now sing we a song for the harvest:
  Thanksgiving and honour and praise
For all that the bountiful Giver
  Hath given to gladden our days,

For grasses of upland and lowland,
  For fruits of the garden and field,
For gold which the mine and the furrow
  To delver and husbandman yield.

But the song it goes deeper and higher;
  There are harvests that eye cannot see;
They ripen on mountains of duty,
  Are reaped by the brave and the free.

And these have been gathered and garnered,
  Some golden with honour and gain,
And some, as with heart's blood, are ruddy,
  The harvests of sorrow and pain.

O Thou who art Lord of the harvest,
  The Giver who gladdens our days,
Our hearts are for ever repeating
  Thanksgiving and honour and praise.[2]

[1] W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Spiritual Message of Dante*, 172.
[2] J. W. Chadwick.

## Forgetting God.

Deut. viii. 11.—'Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God.'

1. This is an admonition which we all require. There is no sin more common than the sin of forgetting God. It is the besetting sin, not only of youth, but of middle age and old age. It is the sin not only of the foolish and frivolous, the sensual and worldly, but of men working hard at their professions and trades, of women absorbed in family cares and social engagements, of teachers and students, of politicians and philanthropists, of preachers and theologians tempted to make ideas of God do duty for God. It is, indeed, not difficult to forget God. God is in the world and in our life, but not in any such way that we cannot escape from the sense of His presence. Not one of us is ever overlooked or forgotten before Him, but it is not often that we feel compelled to remember Him. He does not visibly interfere either with the course of things or with the actions of men. He is the Force behind all forces, the Law behind all laws, the Life behind all that lives, yet to many men He seems far off and appears to do little, if anything. This is a world in which we can be unbelievers as well as believers, can forget as well as remember God. It is a world in which prosperity and pleasure can be more easily secured by the self-seeking and unscrupulous than by the good, and where unreserved devotion to the will of God in the business of life has no direct and inevitable tendency to bring men what is considered fortune. It is seldom that to God's noblest and most faithful sons the world's prizes come, though there is always a sure and deep reward in the unseen realm of the inner and moral life. The kingdom of God ruleth over all, but its epochs are moral. Judgment is always done, but not often in such a way that there can be no doubt as to its being done by those who walk by sight and not by faith, and who are blind to the spiritual aspects of life and to the tendency and final issue of things.

2. There is nothing in which we may not forget God—all the common interests and activities of life, study, recreation, business, friendship, love, science, art, politics, philanthropy, the history and philosophy of religion, theological disputes, ecclesiastical strifes, pleasant Sunday services, and all the excitements that we dignify with the name of religious work in these days. There is no object, either good or bad, on which we eagerly concentrate our attention that may not so grow on the inner vision and spread itself before the soul as to hide all that is beyond—even God. We know from the terrible inward evidence of experience how we lose by sin, by habitual wrongdoing, the power to remember and realize God—and not alone by those grave and flagrant transgressions which affect a man's whole moral nature and his whole spiritual attitude, but by sins we call venial and which involve no outward wickedness, sins which are indeed hardly recognized as sins, and which men may go on committing all their days without any suspicion of their guilt and danger. There may be no striking moral fault, no betrayal of duty, only some petty vanity or pride, a respectable selfishness, a reputable self-indulgence, not even evil things done but good things left undone, yet they have the effect of making the soul less and less sensitive to God. A man may have all his thought and feeling so drawn toward the petty things round him, and toward his own worldly interests and private comforts, that there is in his soul no sense of responsibility to a Divine Judge, no conscious feeling of any relations other than those of home and friendship and business, no conscious relations at least with the unseen and eternal. He lives an honourable life and keeps the way of truth and rectitude loyally, but not for God. He makes his plans and pursues his schemes, but without any reference to the will of God. God is forgotten in the very use and enjoyment of God's gifts. In his occupations and transactions, in his ways of doing business, seeking pleasure, spending money, and passing time, the man forgets God. It cannot be honestly said that God counts as a force in his life. Yes! Work and amusement, family and friendship, are what we each can live for wholly, and in them

forget Him with whom we have to do in all the relations and interests of our passing days.

¶ In Southern France, where attar of roses is distilled, a very curious ailment imperils the workers. The very abundance of the rose-leaves induces a sort of sleeping-sickness. And surely it is even so in the abundances that are sometimes given to man. They are prone to sink him into the sleep of spiritual forgetfulness.

A man's devotion is apt to dwindle as he becomes more successful. Our piety does not keep pace with our purse. Absorption in the bounty makes us forgetful of the Giver. We can be so concerned in the pasturage that the Shepherd is forgotten. Our very fulness is apt to become our foe. Our clearest visions are given us in the winter-time when nature is scanty and poor. The fulness of the leaf blocks the outlook and the distance is hid. And the summer-time of life, when leaves and flowers are plentiful, is apt to bring a veil. And the very plentifulness impedes our communion.[1]

3. And this forgetfulness of God may be found not only in connection with respectable behaviour, but also in connection with much formal and conventional religiousness, and even much lively interest in theological themes. You remember in Shakespeare's *Henry V.* Mistress Quickly's account of the death of Falstaff. Falstaff was very sick, so he cried out, said the woman, 'God, God, God,' three or four times. 'Now I, to comfort him, bid him not think of God; I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet.' To how many is God little more than an unwelcome thought which they must recall in the great hours of living and dying—a name they must utter especially when they are sick and have not many days to live? It may be a very insignificant part which the thought of God plays in their lives; but they cannot banish it altogether from their minds. They cannot escape entirely from that sense of the presence of God which is the echo in their hearts of the Divine Life in the world. There are times when their habitual indifference is broken down. Face to face with death, or during the discipline of some great sorrow or shame, they are stirred with unwonted emotion and are moved to pray; but the visible order of things commands their real interest and strength, and the thought of God has no shaping or controlling influence on their daily life and habit.

4. The forgetting of God passes through many stages. It exists in various degrees. It is, we would fain hope, in few cases an entire forgetfulness never interrupted by a single memory of His goodness and greatness, of His authority and will. Who is, or who can be, entirely forgetful of God? And yet forgetfulness of God ever tends to grow and increase until one does not wish to remember God at all. It may be something one falls into thoughtlessly at first, but it grows and grows till things are actually avoided which suggest the great remembrance, and means are taken not only to prevent but to drown serious thought, until men can live long days and weeks without thinking of God. Consider this, you who are beginning to find it easy to forget God, beginning to be so absorbed by outward things that you are allowing yourselves less and less leisure for pursuing the things which belong to your peace. Beware lest you go from carelessness to worse, and begin to think and to act on the thought that there is not so much in religion after all. The mind seeking to be consistent soon frames a theory to justify itself to itself; our opinions are much influenced by our wishes. What we do not wish to remember we easily forget, and by-and-by easily doubt, and finally easily deny—rejecting as false what we want to be false.

If I lay waste, and wither up with doubt
The blessed fields of Heaven where once my faith
Possessed itself serenely safe from death;
If I deny the things past finding out;
Or if I orphan my own soul of One
That seemed a Father, and make void the place

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Things that Matter Most*, 34.

Within me where He dwelt in power and grace,
What do I gain by that I have undone? [1]

5. A life in which God is forgotten is a life without the best moral protection and stimulus! What takes from a man the sense of relationship and responsibility to God and leaves him without the sanctions and inspirations drawn from the invisible and eternal world, takes with it much of his moral energy and stamina, impoverishes his life in every way and at every point, narrows his mind, depresses his imagination, enfeebles his conscience, robs him of much strength for enduring trial and resisting temptation, makes him as the years multiply less sensitive to high ideals, less aspiring, less enthusiastic, less heroic.

(1) Wherever God is not remembered but forgotten we see a depreciation of the worth and sanctity even of the physical life, a disposition to hold it cheaply and in the hour of bitter disappointment to throw it away altogether. There can be no doubt that the decay of faith has not a little to do with the loosening of the ties which bind man to life. It is not easy outward conditions which bind man to life. The pessimism of recent years is not so much the outcome of struggle as of ease, and the rejection of life which frequently goes along with it is due, not to impatient resentment against hardship, poverty, and pain, but to the exhaustions of worldliness and irreligion.

¶ We find an example of this in Tolstoy's life. 'I felt,' says Tolstoy, 'that something had broken within me on which my life had always rested, that I had nothing left to hold on to, and that morally my life had stopped. An invincible force impelled me to get rid of my existence, in one way or another. It cannot be said exactly that I *wished* to kill myself, for the force which drew me away from life was fuller, more powerful, more general than any mere desire. It was a force like my old aspiration to live, only it impelled me in the opposite direction. It was an inspiration of my whole being to get out of life.

[1] W. D. Howells.

Behold me then, a man happy and in good health, hiding the rope in order not to hang myself to the rafters of the room where every night I went to sleep alone; behold me no longer going shooting, lest I should yield to the too easy temptation of putting an end to myself with my gun.

I did not know what I wanted. I was afraid of life; I was driven to leave it; and in spite of that I still hoped something from it.

All this took place at a time when, so far as all my outer circumstances went, I ought to have been completely happy. I had a good wife who loved me and whom I loved; good children and a large property which was increasing with no pains taken on my part. I was more respected by my kinsfolk and acquaintances than I had ever been; I was loaded with praise by strangers; and without exaggeration I could believe my name already famous. Moreover I was neither insane nor ill. On the contrary, I possessed a physical and mental strength which I have rarely met in persons of my age. I could mow as well as the peasants, I could work with my brain eight hours uninterruptedly and feel no bad effects. Yet,' says Tolstoy, '. . . something . . . kept me from the deed—a consciousness of life, as I may call it, which was like a force that obliged my mind to fix itself in another direction and draw me out of my situation of despair. . . . During the whole course of this year, when I almost unceasingly kept asking myself how to end the business, whether by the rope or by the bullet, during all that time, alongside of all those movements of my ideas and observations, my heart kept languishing with another pining emotion. I can call this by no other name than that of a thirst for God. . . . I remember,' he says, 'one day in early spring, I was alone in the forest, lending my ear to its mysterious noises. I listened, and my thought went back to what for these three years it always was busy with—the quest of God. But the idea of him, I said, how did I ever come by the idea?

And again there arose in me, with this thought, glad aspirations towards life. Everything in me awoke and received a meaning. . . . Why do I look farther? a voice within

me asked. He is there: he, without whom one cannot live. To acknowledge God and to live are one and the same thing. God is what life is. Well, then! live, seek God, and there will be no life without him. . . .

After this, things cleared up within me and about me better than ever, and the light has never wholly died away. I was saved from suicide. Just how or when the change took place I cannot tell. But as insensibly and gradually as the force of life had been annulled within me, and I had reached my moral death-bed, just as gradually and imperceptibly did the energy of life come back. And what was strange was that this energy that came back was nothing new. It was my ancient juvenile force of faith, the belief that the sole purpose of my life was to be better.'[1]

(2) But there are worse losses than that of the sense of the value of the physical life involved in the loss of the believing heart. Without the vital recognition of God and His will all the best things in human life and human society—the love of truth as truth, the love of right as right, the love of man as man—will tend to grow weak and poor. It is only in theory that morality — the higher morality, at least — is independent of the sanctions and inspirations of religious faith. The best sanctities of life are in the keeping of religion. The emphasis placed upon ethical culture in our day is great. But ethics must have a foundation deeper than custom, prudence, selfish calculation, and worldly experience. Morality, as distinct from mere prudential self-interest, cannot exist in any noble form apart from faith in and communion with the living God. Even the best of motives—public benefit, the good of posterity, and the like—lack power to kindle and command. Forgetting God it is easier to forget the claims of the higher and wider life, the claims of difficult duty and the claims of our fellow-men.

It is easy, of course, to point out men to-day who are pursuing high ideals and living noble and beneficent lives without any conscious faith in God; but all, or nearly all of them, are the spiritual heirs of men whose souls thirsted for God, even the living God, and they are now living on ideas and sentiments and by habits which they would never have known but for their religious training. It takes more than one generation to get religion into the blood, and it will take more than one to get it out of the blood. What Renan said of himself many others might say of themselves: 'I feel that my life is governed still by the faith which I have formally renounced.'

¶ As life drew near its close, and the shadows increased, George Eliot seems to have turned yearningly to the memories and hopes of her youth. It is not surprising to learn that 'the Bible was a very precious and sacred Book to her,' and that she and her husband—Mr. Cross—read it aloud together daily. Even in the days of her unnatural alliance with George Henry Lewes, when both Religion and the custom of civilised society in the matter of marriage were violated, she read the Bible. 'Mr. Lewes (she wrote) is not fond of reading the Bible himself, but sees no harm in my reading it.' The truth is George Eliot belonged more to the Bible than she did to George Henry Lewes and the Rationalism of which he was a chief exponent. She had been torn from her early rooted oneness with the Bible, and for years she had lived in professed opposition to it. But the wound made in her religious nature by the rupture never healed. And as time went on, and Rationalism failed to meet her needs, the Bible claimed her and gained her again. Not as in the days of her youth. Not in any definite act of surrender and open acknowledgment of change. But most certainly in heart-yearning and heart-turning.[1]

6. Where, then, shall we look for protection against this evil? What will keep the sense of God's presence from passing out of our life? Moses bids Israel find it in two things: (1) in cherishing a devout spirit of thankfulness to God, and (2) in the exercise of religious worship—the regular offering of our thanksgiving and praise to the Giver of all good. We know that the faith that never finds expression by

[1] W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 153, 156, 185.

[1] Henry Lewis, *Modern Rationalism*, 354.

and by dies out. In like manner the gratitude to God which is never expressed in devout worship will die out also. 'Thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.' To this is added the charge: 'Therefore, shall ye lay up these my words in your heart. . . . Ye shall teach them your children.' 'When ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land . . . there shall be a place which the Lord thy God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there.' In these will lie Israel's safety and ours—God's Word devoutly cherished in the heart, the pious teaching of our children at the home fireside, our humble and thankful worship in the House of God. These are what God asks. Are these being neglected among us? Can our neglect of these be the reason why God is forgotten? Is this the message that comes to us from our text?

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget.

## The Witness of Israel.

Deut. ix. 29.—'They are thy people and thine inheritance.'

It is related of a certain royal chaplain that, being asked often by his sovereign to give a concise and convincing argument in favour of Christianity, he replied in two words—'The Jews.' It is this subject that we are to consider—the history and character of the Israelite race as a witness to Christianity. The subject is forced upon our notice by that remarkable chapter in Deuteronomy which, by prophetic insight, brings out with singular distinctness the prominent character and subsequent career of the race. Only reflect upon such expressions as these:—'Go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven'; 'Understand, therefore, this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee'; 'The Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people'; 'Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.'

Read these passages in the full light which thirty centuries of the nation's history have thrown upon them. Study this contrast between their character and their achievements as it unfolds itself in all their subsequent history. Consider, on the one hand, not only the first conquest of Canaan to which the words more immediately refer, but the succession of far more brilliant victories over the great nations of the world, culminating in that most magnificent triumph of all—the triumph of Christianity. Consider, on the other hand, not only those early murmurings and idolatries in the wilderness to which the language more directly points, but that long catalogue of rebellions of which the subsequent history of Israel is made up, and which reached its climax in the martyrdom of the Lord of Life. Set these one against the other, and you will confess that the utterances of Deuteronomy are wonderful anticipations of the future, succinct epitomes of centuries yet to come. You may question, if you will, every single prophecy in the Old Testament, but the whole history of the Jews is one continuous prophecy, more distinct and articulate than all. You may deny, if you will, every successive miracle which is recorded therein, but again the history of the Jews is, from first to last, one stupendous miracle more wonderful and convincing than all. *Here* you have a small insignificant people—stiffnecked, rebellious, worthless; *there* you have the most magnificent spiritual achievements—the most signal moral victories. What conclusion can you draw, except that which is drawn for you in the words already quoted: 'The Lord thy God is he which goeth over before you'?—'They are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and thy stretched out arm.'

1. Look first at the capacities of the people themselves. The Jews had no remarkable gifts which might have led us to anticipate this unique destiny. They had no intellectual qualities of a very high order like the Greeks—vivid imagination, subtlety of thought, æsthetic taste; no political capacity like the Romans, no organizing power or faculty of legislation which might secure for them the ascendency over the nations of the world.

They were, moreover, a stubborn, exclusive, intolerant people—an unpractical people without the power, or at least the will, to adapt themselves to the institutions, the feelings, and the prejudices of the people with whom they were brought in contact. They were believed, in consequence, to cherish an universal hatred against the rest of mankind; and they, in turn, were hated by all—hated, not with the hatred of an admiring envy, but with the hatred of a supercilious scorn.

2. Turn now from the people themselves to the land of their abode. Certainly this does not enable us to solve the enigma. Palestine does not occupy a large space in the Christian's imagination, for it is a very minute, insignificant spot in the map of the world. It is, moreover, incapable of expansion, for it is bounded on all sides either by sea, or by mountains, or by vast and impracticable deserts. To a great extent all the country is mountainous and barren, and even this meagre and unpromising territory is not all their own. The sea-coast would have been valuable to a people gifted with commercial instincts. With commerce they might have extended their influence. But from the sea-coast they were wholly excluded. The Phœnicians on the north and the Philistines on the south occupied all the most important harbours; and this territory of the Jews was so unexpansive, so barren, so unpromising that they were placed at a still greater disadvantage when compared with the surrounding peoples.

3. The Jews were surrounded by the most formidable neighbours. On the one side was Egypt, a country of the highest fertility, the foremost military power in the world. It had a civilization which dated from a period long before the birth of the father of the Israelite people, and it stood foremost in works of art in its day. Who was Israel, then, that it could withstand Egypt? On the other side was another mighty empire, first Assyria, then Babylon, the only rival of Egypt in the ancient world. In these countries they had the same advantage of wide plains of exceptional fertility, a high and remote civilization, an army of tremendous strength, a centralization under an absolute rule, and all the resources which a great and vast dominion could command. As Persia succeeded Babylon, and as Babylon succeeded Assyria, so Persia—far more mighty and terrible—overran and conquered all Western Asia. Egypt itself fell. Palestine was a mere speck, surrounded by the huge dominions of the Persian monarch. What chance had Israel against such terrible neighbours? Must it not be crushed and ground to atoms and annihilated by its foes?

4. Now, it might have been supposed that, however stubborn and impracticable the Jews were in their attitude towards others, they would at least be united among themselves, they would be loyal to their country, faithful to their laws and institutions, true to their God. This internal cohesion would give them strength to resist, this absolute harmony would win for them an influence that would compensate for the superior advantages of their more powerful neighbours. But what do we find as a matter of fact? Their national history is one continuous record of murmuring, of rebellion, of internal feuds, of moral and spiritual defection. They have no sooner escaped from Egyptian bondage, their necks still bearing the scars of the tyrants' yoke, than they fall into shameless idolatry. The worship of the golden calf is only the type and presence of still more guilty lapses in centuries yet to come; the revolt against Moses and Aaron only the type and shadow of the rebellious spirit to which Israel rose in the distant future. Again and again the religion of Jehovah is effaced, or almost effaced, from the mind of the nation. Again and again the hideous idolatries of Moloch—idolatries cruel, profligate, and shameless—supplant the worship of the Lord of heaven and earth. And the political condition of the nation is not one whit more hopeful than the religious. When unity alone can save the people, then there is disruption. The Ten Tribes are severed from the House of David, never to be united again. The power of one kingdom is spent in neutralizing the power of the other. That is a concise history of the race during the period from the disruption to the captivity.

5. Thus, however we look at the matter, there is nothing which affords ground for hope; and when we question actual facts, we find they correspond to those expectations we should have formed from the character and position of the nation. Never has any people lived upon the earth who passed through such terrible disasters as the Jews. Never has any people been oftener near to absolute extinction and yet survived. Again and again the vision of the prophet has been realized. Again and again the valley of the shadow of death has been strewn with the dry bones of carcases seemingly extinct. Again and again there have been seasons of dark despair when even the most hopeful, challenged by the Divine voice, could only respond, 'O Lord God, thou knowest!' But again and again there has been a shaking of the dry bones—the bones have come together, bone to bone; they have been strung with sinews and clothed with flesh; breath has been breathed into them, and they have lived, and have become an exceeding great army. Think of those many centuries of Egyptian bondage, when the life of the nation seemed to have been strangled in its infancy. Reflect on that period in its youthful career when it was fighting its way inch by inch, and struggling for very existence in Palestine. Look forward and see its fate during the manhood of the nation under its king, the land now divided against itself, and now overrun by successive invaders. For a time Israel was a plaything in the hands of terrible neighbours, tossed to and fro between two powerful rivals —Egypt on the one side, and Assyria and Babylon on the other—till at length, in a moment of victory, it was swept away. Could anything seem more hopeless than the revival of the nation from the Babylonish captivity? Yet from Babylon, as from Egypt, Israel returned. A new lease of life was granted, and with it there followed a new lease of disaster also. Israel's old fate pursued it still. It was rescued from the fangs of Babylon only to be food for the Assyrians. It was drawn from the feet of the Assyrians only to be devoured by the insatiable Roman.

¶ The Jew has made a marvellous fight in this world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendour, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and agressive mind.[1]

6. And yet all the while—and this is the remarkable fact—amidst calamities the most overwhelming and suffering the most intense—exiled, enslaved, trampled under foot, almost anihilated—all the while Israel was hopeful, jubilant, triumphant still. It was always dying, and behold it lived. Century after century prophets had declared, in no ambiguous terms, that despite all these adverse appearances, despite all these wearisome delays, Israel had a magnificent future. The nations might rage, and the kings of the earth might do their worst—they were powerless against Israel's destiny. A sceptre should rise out of Jacob which would subdue the world, and a King should sit on David's throne before whose footstool all the nations of the earth should bow. A standard should be set up in Zion around which all mankind should rally. 'Behold thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee'; 'The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves at the soles of thy feet'; 'Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitation; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolated cities to be inhabited.'

[1] Mark Twain.

7. And these hopes—these extravagant hopes—were more than realized. A King *did* rise out of Jacob to whom all the nations of the civilized world have rendered homage such as no sovereign received before or after—the homage of their heart, the homage of their lives. At the call of Israel the Gentiles flocked to the standard set up in Zion. From far and near the cultured Greek, the proud Roman, the Assyrian and the Egyptian, master and slave, flocked around that standard. To East and West alike Israel has dictated its sentiments, its beliefs, its morals, its laws and its institutions. An influence far deeper, far wider, far more tenacious has appeared from that despised, insulted, down-trodden people than was ever achieved by the splendid literature of Greece or the historic empire of Rome. These are not theories, but facts—facts which some will attempt to explain away, but facts which none can deny. *Here* is the prophecy—*there* is the fulfilment. The prophecy is not a single isolated prediction of ambiguous meaning, but large and clear, written across the whole history of a nation from margin to margin. And the fulfilment corresponds to the prophecy; it is legible to all men because stamped on the face of the world.

8. Is there not here the manifestation of the Divine providence? Do we not rightly claim the Jews as the principal witnesses to Christianity, or shall we set all this down as mere accident, a freak of fortune, a superficial correspondence without any essential connection? Shall it be regarded as mere accident that, within a few years after the appearing of this King who has thus gathered the Gentiles to His standard, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the nation scattered to the four winds of the earth—that the polity of Israel for ever ceased, and that revival was rendered thenceforward impossible? Shall we say that it is mere argument that for eighteen centuries—a period as long as that which elapsed from the proclamation of the law by Moses to the fulfilment of the law by Christ—this state of things has remained? Or should we not rather say that in this coincidence also there is a Divine significance—that He proclaimed with no uncertain sound the obituary of the old order and the commencement of the new—that God's seal is stamped upon the character of the Church, whereby Israel after the Spirit is substituted for Israel after the flesh?

9. Do we ask what it was that gave the Jewish people this vitality, this power? The answer is simple: 'They are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power, and by thy stretched out arm.' It was the consciousness of this close relationship with Jehovah, the omnipotent and ever-present God—it was the sense of their glorious destiny that marked them out as the teachers of mankind. It was the conviction that they were the possessors of glorious truths, and that those truths must in the end prevail, that was the secret source of their strength. Do we ask, again, how it came to pass that, when Israel called to the Gentiles, the Gentiles responded to the call and flocked to its standard? Here, again, the answer is simple: 'Because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel.' The Gentiles had everything else in their possession, but this one thing they lacked—knowledge of God, their Father; and without this all their magnificent gifts could not satisfy. Therefore, when at length the cry went forth, 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,' they hurried to the fountains of salvation to slake their burning thirst. Culture and civilization, arts and commerce, institutions and laws—no nation can afford to undervalue these; but not only do all these things soon fade, but the people themselves fall into corruption and decay if the Breath of Life be wanting.

And as with nations, so with individuals. We may cultivate the intellect to the highest pitch; we may surround ourselves with all the luxuries and refinements of civilization; but the time will come when these things will fail to sustain us. It may come in some season of bereavement, in the hour of sickness or of loss. It may come in the failure and decay of powers. It may come in the pains of our death-agony. It may come—and this is the most solemn thought of all—after we have passed the confines of the grave. But come it

must sooner or later; for we are children of God, and we cannot with impunity ignore or deny the Father of earth and heaven. There only is rest and peace; there only is true life for the soul of man.

¶ Not long ago there died a man eminent in scientific knowledge and achievement, who towards the close of his comparatively brief life was brought back from remote mental wanderings to God in Christ. I refer to the late Mr. George Romanes. He was a man of blameless morals, exemplary in every personal duty; and he seemed constrained, to his own infinite unhappiness, to disbelieve in God. He tried, in this sad condition, to make life satisfactory without Him. He gave himself up fully to his own refined and elevated line of thought and work. He was a diligent and masterly observer and enquirer amidst the mysteries of nature, and a kindly and unselfish man besides. But was he satisfied? Listen to his own avowal: 'I felt as if I were trying to feed a starving man with light confectionery.' It would not do. Nothing would do but the living God. He sought, he felt, he knelt his way back to Him, and he was satisfied at last.[1]

## God's Self-Limitation.

Deut. x. 14, 15.—'Behold, unto the Lord thy God belongeth the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them.'

THE text carries with it the sense of a paradox which is inherent in all religious belief beyond the most primitive, the paradox that a Being infinite, eternal, absolute, should enter into relations with men at all. A sense of this paradox lies at the root of a good many of the difficulties of belief in our own day. If there be a God at all, men say, He is immanent in the whole infinite universe; how then can it be supposed that He has a care for individual lives, that He acts in special providences, that He has given a specific revelation of Himself in the Bible, or that He is incarnate in the historic person of Jesus of Nazareth? The fundamental problem in all these questions is just this: any religion at all seems to involve a limitation of the Infinite, and how can that be?

This paradox was in the mind of the writer to whom we owe this passage. The highest minds in Israel had arrived at a high conception of God, but the very height of the conception brought with it the paradox. While the primitive Hebrew clans thought, as they certainly did once think, that Jehovah was resident on Sinai and exercised His sway over the territory of Canaan but nothing more, it was easy to believe in His intimate concern with the affairs of the Israelite people. But by the time Deuteronomy was written a higher conception of God had appeared: 'Unto the Lord thy God belongeth the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that therein is.' How could a God like that interest Himself in the affairs of a particular people?

Now it was their success in holding together a belief in the infinity of God with an equally firm belief that His hand was in their own life that gave the Hebrew prophets their pre-eminent place in the development of religion. Their lofty sense of the infinite greatness of God, a God not as the gods of the nations, but one and supreme, would not permit them to lessen one jot of His majesty; yet they knew with the same knowledge of personal experience that the Lord was their God. It is their firm, uncompromising proclamation of both sides of the truth that makes their greatness. The paradox evokes in them not doubt, but amazement and gratitude.

1. We shall not expect to find a reasoned explanation of the paradox. Indeed, it is doubtful if these ultimate truths can find any sufficient reconciliation through purely intellectual processes. It is knowledge of the heart rather than of the brain that the prophets give us. It is the knowledge of the man who has known God in his own soul, unmistakably, directly, so that no reasoning could ever persuade him that God does not actually deal with him; and who also has a vision broad enough to know that the God who has spoken with him can be no other and no less than the infinite Being who pervades the universe.

[1] H. C. G. Moule.

But while the prophet gives us no reasoned theology of the matter, the mode in which he links together the two sides of the truth in his own mind is of the utmost importance. He clings to the fundamental truth which alone makes it possible for us to think of Divine things at all in any clear way—the truth that God is a Person, at least as personal as ourselves, and able, like us, but in more perfect measure, to choose and to love. 'The Lord had a delight in thy fathers to *love* them, and he *chose* their seed after them.' The Lord loved, the Lord chose. He exercised in full measure the prerogatives of personality. It was only because He loved and chose to act in accord with His love that the Infinite entered into relations with men.

In the language of modern thought, we may put it thus: that it is possible for the Infinite to be limited, because it is a voluntary self-limitation. God is high enough to humble Himself, great enough to make Himself small, infinite enough to enter into finite relations. If the best and greatest men are capable of stooping to help their fellows, surely God is good enough and great enough to do the same thing in a fuller measure.

¶ We know something of what self-limitation means. The missionary enterprise of the Christian Church has afforded countless illustrations of it. Professor Albrecht Schweitzer of Strasburg, perhaps the most conspicuous Biblical scholar of the younger generation, two of whose books have done more than anything else to determine the trend of theological thought for our time, having given up his professorial chair, sailed for the most pestilential region of the Congo as a missionary, to take up the work of two friends of his who had successively died there. He cut himself off from the environment congenial to his great intellectual gifts. He went into a country reeking with tropical fevers, likely enough to waste his powers and carry him off at a comparatively early age. Worldly wisdom would say that he 'threw himself away.' But all this he did in order to help fellowmen who can only be helped at that cost.[1]

[1] C. Harold Dodd.

2. Now this truth of the voluntary self-limitation of the Infinite meets some of the difficulties which beset the minds of those who think about such things to-day.

(1) First of all there is the general difficulty, a very real one, of finding any room for the communion of the soul with God in a universe which, if there be a God at all, must be pervaded by Him in every part. This difficulty has become intensified since the time of Deuteronomy; for though the writer uses all the expressions he can find to indicate the vastness of God's domain, yet his conception of the universe was relatively a small one: there was the earth as a centre, and above it the heaven, and above that an undefined region called the heaven of heavens. All these belonged to the Lord. It was a great thing for a man to say to a people only just rising out of a belief in a God who was little more than a glorified man dwelling on a mountain. But how much vaster is the conception of the universe that modern science has given! The brain simply reels at the attempt to conceive its vastness. Our earth is, in strictest literalness, but a speck of dust in the infinity of space. And when the mind, after attempting to realize the immensity, thinks, under the influence of what some have called 'cosmic emotion,' of the unimaginable vastness of any mind that can be supposed to lie behind such a vast system, it does become difficult to believe that we insignificant inhabitants of one of the meanest members of an obscure group of worlds can have any special or individual relation to the Absolute Being whose existence we surmise.

A pantheism which substitutes passive absorption in the whole for free communion with God is the recourse of many minds to-day. But before resting in that, let us at least understand what the Scriptural doctrine is. It bids us conceive as nobly and greatly as we can the 'high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity'; but it bids us also believe that He is a Person, loving and free; able to place Himself in relation even to the least of His creatures because He is infinite in power; willing to do so because He is infinite in love. It *is* a paradox that the Infinite should com-

mune with the finite; it is a paradox that the Infinite alone can bring into effect. A voluntary self-limitation under the motive of love is the only basis, but it is a sufficient basis, for a belief that God can deal with us as individuals. That is at least enough to challenge us to the experiment—

> O make but trial of His love,
> Experience will decide
> How blest are they, and only they,
> Who in His truth confide.

(2) Next, there is the difficulty of believing in a special revelation such as that which Christians claim to have in the Bible. How, it is asked, can that be a revelation of God which is simply the record of the religious experience of a few representatives of an obscure people, necessarily narrow in outlook because of their geographical and historical position, and bounded on all sides by the limitations of a particular civilization in a particular period of time? Surely, if God has revealed Himself at all, it must be in the big whole of His universe. He is immanent in the whole, and if we want to know Him we must know the universe with all the thoroughness that science can achieve. Pending such knowledge we must preserve an attitude of agnosticism, for it cannot be that the Infinite Being has really spoken in a medium so full of limitations as the Bible.

The objection is one that has great force and points to a real difficulty. But the objector may be asked to consider, in the first place, whether all the greatest things in human history have not been achieved in a medium of limitations. Certainly, the highest triumphs of the human genius, and those which, because of their loftiness, have the widest, most universal appeal, have been produced by those who most fully represented a very strongly individualized culture. Nothing in art has ever surpassed the masterpieces of Greek sculpture, which were the work of a small group of men in half-a-dozen towns—towns which had an intensely specialized life of their own, and but a very detached outlook upon the great world of their day. And the more the Greek world broadened, and the more Greek art strove to be universal, the less perfect did it become. In poetry, again, few works have a more universal appeal than the wonderful *Divine Comedy* of Dante; yet Dante was the poet of a particular Church, of a particular town, and that no large town, and of a particular party in that town, and he wrote in what was then but a provincial dialect. In the whole domain of human achievement the principle appears to be true. In order to attain its highest, in order to be most widely human, the spirit of art, or of poetry, or whatever it be, must find for itself the straitest bounds, and the lasting influence of any great movement of the human spirit is proportioned not to its breadth of scope, but to its depth and intensity. And may not that be true of religion? May it not be that, in order to impress the world of men most adequately, the Spirit of God *must* clothe itself in the straitest limitations? If that be the best way of impressing humanity with the seal of Divinity, then surely God is loving enough and great enough to find that way, and to put it into operation on our behalf.

(3) Finally, there is a question which touches the heart of our religion. The mind of to-day, saturated with the thought of the infinity of the universe, asks incredulously, How can anyone suppose that the Infinite Being was manifested upon earth in the person of a man who lived and died in Palestine in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar? Now you will see already how the text bears upon a question like that. The Incarnation can, in fact, be regarded only as the fulfilment of God's voluntary self-limitation. Already in these words of Deuteronomy there is a prophecy of Christ; for the God who chose to manifest Himself in the history of a people was already limiting His own infinity for love of men; and because that love was so infinite He could not stop till all the riches of His glory were displayed in one man, for in an individual alone can the glory of personality be worthily manifested.

Looked at from this point of view, all history is a gradual focussing of the eternal Light for human eyes. Set a burning-glass in the path of the sun's rays, and they bend inwards, ever narrowing in scope until they meet in

one point of intolerable light and heat. And the love of God is a lens which brings to a focus for us His infinite Being. The whole material universe is the first reflection of the light, but it is too diffuse for us to apprehend, except through ages of toil; in man the light is already concentrated and made brighter; in the great seers and prophets through whom God has given His special revelations to men it is still more limited, and still brighter; and in Christ we reach the focus point. Not a world, or a race, or a people was sufficient to express the being of God; all these are too diffuse; an individual person alone could bring all His glory to a focus. In our Lord the world sees but a local teacher, limited as any man is limited by the circumstances of his time and place; but we see that these very limitations are the medium through which the Eternal has expressed Himself: 'in the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory.' Any consistent interpretation of religion must lead to some form of belief in the Incarnation.

Through all the ages since the primal ray,
Herald of life, first smote the abysmal night
Of elemental Chaos, and the might
Of the Creative Spark informed the clay,
From worm to brute, from brute to man—its way
The Shaping Thought took upward, flight on flight,
By stages which Earth's loftiest unite
Unto her least, made kin to such as they.
As living link, or prophecy, or type
Of purpose for fulfilment yet unripe,
Each has its niche in the supreme design;
Converging to one Pinnacle, whereat
Sole stands Creation's Masterpiece—and that
Which was through her—the Human made Divine.[1]

[1] Ellen Mary Clerke.

## Hills and Valleys.

Deut. xi. 11.—'The land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys.'

THERE is a fine sermon in these words. Stand here and look upon the pleasant landscape. The still valley with the music of its laughing brook, the flowered bank and bending trees that hang their branches down to kiss the stream. On either side the meadows where the cattle stand in the luxuriant growth of pasture; and then the gentle slopes on which the flocks wander. Above, the hill rises clad with gray olives or vineyards, and upward it stretches to where the fir-trees grow among the heaped-up boulders, until the hard ridge-line seems close against the deep blue sky.

1. What makes the beauty? The happy combination. If there had been no hills there had been no valleys; if there had been no valleys there had been no hills. So it is in the land which we go to possess.. The hills, so hard to climb, that make us sigh and wonder why they are sent—they make the glad and fruitful valleys. If life were all one dead level every pleasure would grow wearisome; the dull sameness of life would oppress us. We want the hills and valleys. The steep climb shows us the landscape that we could never have seen otherwise. The little annoyances and vexations make the pleasant things fresh in their pleasantness. Only he who has tasted the bitterness of sorrow for sin can taste and see how gracious the Lord is. The beauty, the blessedness, the pleasure of our life is more dependent than we can ever know on the hills of life. The land whither thou goest is a land of hills and valleys.

2. Look again. The hills drink in the rain of heaven and thereby make the valleys fruitful. The desert is a desert because no hills rise up to heaven to touch the clouds and bring down blessings on the thirsty land below. The hills collect the rain for a hundred fruitful valleys. Ah, so is it with us! It is the hill difficulty that drives us to the throne of grace and fetches down a shower of blessing. It

is the trial that sends us to the Lord for help. The hills, the bleak hills of life that we wonder at and perhaps grumble at, bring down the showers. They drink in the rain from heaven.

3. And yet again, the hills give to the valleys their fruitfulness and beauty by protecting them. They rise up and shut back bleak winds and furious storms; and in the sunny shelter the valleys are covered over with corn, and the pastures are clothed with flocks. So is the land whither we go to possess it—a land of hills and valleys. How the soul had been blighted, withered, dead, if no steep, hungry hill had risen for its shelter. How many have perished in the wilderness, buried under its golden sands, who would have lived and thriven in the hill-country. We cannot tell what loss and sorrow and trial are doing for us. Do not judge, much less grumble. Trust only. Many a soul would have been killed by the frost, blighted with winds, swept desolate of tree and fruit but for the hill—stern, hard, rugged, so steep to climb, so hindering intercourse and our 'getting on.' God's hills are a gracious protection for His people against their foes.

4. Hills and valleys. Hills not only for beauty, for rain, for shelter, but also for fruit. The valleys were for corn. The hills were for the vine; the terraced slopes were mantled with green leaves and hung with luscious fruit. And higher up there was the silver-gray of the rich olive. In the valleys the golden fruit of gratitude and love. But on the hillside fruits of patience that do not grow in the valley, and sweet charity that sometimes thrives best in a poorer soil and nearer heaven; and on the very brow of the hill brave trust and tough endurance.

If all the skies were sunshine,
Our faces would be fain
To feel once more upon them
The cooling plash of rain.

If all the world were music,
Our hearts would often long
For one sweet strain of silence,
To break the endless song.

If life were always merry,
Our souls would seek relief
And rest from weary laughter
In the quiet arms of grief.[1]

## The Soil and the Rain.

Deut. xi. 13, 14.—'If ye hearken . . . I will give you the rain.'

And so always, when the soil needs it, God gives the rain. The world of Nature waits for the rain as though its baptism were the beginning of new life, and this sacrament of power descends in the rain to each stalk and root and makes it ready to lift itself in verdure and bloom.

It is the same with that spring-time which comes to the human soul through the religious life. One of the most dangerous heresies about religion is the notion that religion is an achievement, a research, a consequence of theology or philosophy. We speak of proving God, or of getting religion, or of finding Christ, as though our religion were a self-developing growth, a supreme effort of the reason or the will. Of course this element of initiative is as essential a part of religion as the self-development of the plant in the order of Nature. Yet this lift of the reason toward truth is a response to the persuasion of God, like the answer of the plant to the persuasion of sunshine and rain. What the spring-time is in Nature, that religion is in the soul. It is the concurrence of the inward desire with the Power from above. 'We loved him,' says the Apostle, 'because he first loved us.' Antecedent to the growth of the soul is the descent of the rain of God. Before we prove God, He proves us. Before we find Christ, He finds us. The Prodigal's coming to himself was but the answer of his will to the call of the waiting Father.

A mind which hides itself from these influences of the Eternal is like a plant in the dark, which becomes a colourless, meagre, spindly growth. The normal way of life is in the co-operation of the effort from within and the influence from above. Nothing is more mysterious, and yet nothing is more natural,

[1] Henry Van Dyke.

than this spring-time of the soul. The life that has been unfruitful, ineffective, sterile, wintry, greets the descending rain, and then there—

Comes to soul and sense
The feeling which is evidence
That very near about us lies
The realm of spiritual mysteries. . . .
Then duty leaves to love its task,
The beggar Self forgets to ask;
With smile of trust and folded hands,
The growing soul in waiting stands
To feel, as flowers the sun and dew,
The One true Life its own renew.

¶ Less and less, I think, grows the consciousness of seeking God. Greater and greater grows the certainty that He is seeking us and giving Himself to us to the complete measure of our present capacity. That is Love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us. I am sure that we ought to dwell far more upon God's love for us than on our love for Him. There is such a thing as putting ourselves in the way of God's overflowing love and letting it break upon us till the response of love to Him comes, not by struggle, not even by deliberation, but by necessity, as the echo comes when the sound strikes the rock. And this, which must have been true wherever the soul of God and the soul of man have lived, is perfectly and finally manifest in the Christhood of which it is the heart and soul.[1]

## Heaven Upon Earth.

(NEW YEAR).

Deut. xi. 21.—'As the days of heaven upon the earth.'

This has been the dream of man in all ages, the hope of the faithful, the vision of the seer, in some form or other the aim of every sincere lover of his kind, the great consummation which inspires the work of reformer and philanthropist and missionary. It expresses the ideal for the world, the happy future towards which the whole creation groans and travails, the golden age ever in front of us, of which we dream and for which we pray—'the days of heaven upon the earth.'

1. The words aptly describe that reaching forward which we trace in every page of the Bible, through the history of the chosen people, through the typology of the priestly narratives, through the vision of the prophets, through the hope and despair and sorrow and joy of the psalmists, as they cry, 'O Lord, how long?' or as their song is hushed into peace when they see the vision. Nothing else will satisfy them: nothing less will they strive for —'the days of heaven upon the earth.' There is no single phrase which can so sum up the one underlying aim of the Bible amid its manifold variety.

(1) Think how it expresses the expected result of the Books of the Law, that human life may be so governed by Divine law, so restrained and impelled by the fear of the Lord, that it may indeed become as the very days of heaven upon the earth. Think how it gives the moral of all the historical books, even when they record failure, and the very opposite of this dream—when they tell of days that are as hell upon earth, when they have to paint desolation and destruction through evil living and false religion and foolish government and the weakening of morale. It is all the obverse of the other possibility, all a sad pointing of the moral that it ought to be different, that it might have been different, been even as the days of heaven upon the earth. Think how it expresses the prophetic books, so varied in tone and temper, in language and in situation, and yet one in the same passion for righteousness, and one in the same prophetic hope—all inspired by the same faith and all sustained by the same sweet vision, of the days that may be to faithful Israel, days that shall be, the days of heaven upon the earth.

(2) Think how it colours and explains the New Testament, from the message of John the Baptist, with his announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, to the last vision of St. John, the Evangelist: 'I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorn-

[1] *Phillips Brooks*, 606.

ed for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.'

(3) Think how it expresses much of our Lord's teaching—His teaching about the gentle life, about forgiving one another, about love and good-will, peace and service, humble piety and sweet faith in the Heavenly Father; His teaching about the Kingdom of God, which indeed He came to found, gathering men into its glorious dominion, transforming the world by its holy laws—even His prayer which He taught His disciples, that God's will may be done on earth even as it is done in heaven, and that His Kingdom may come among men. Is not the promise of the Christian faith only a richer and grander variant of the words, 'as the days of heaven upon the earth,' pointing to true blessedness and peace for the individual believer, and for the world, when the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of God and His Christ?

2. The words are as a master-key to unlock the many doors of the Bible, because they are as a master-key to unlock the human heart. Deep among the secret things of the human heart lies this faith for the future, this hope of a golden age. No cynic's sneer or satirist's scorn can destroy the hope which comes back after every disaster and every disillusionment. In every sphere it is so. The reformer thinks that if only he can get this abuse remedied or that reform introduced it will be the beginning of a new régime, the beginning of the days of heaven upon the earth. It gives him courage to labour and patience to wait. Even when sometimes the expected reform comes, and disappoints with its small results, the true reformer is not dismayed. He strikes into the battle for the next point of vantage, the next gain which he believes will at least bring nearer the good time of the days of heaven upon the earth. In Church and State, in business and politics, true hearts ever look forward to a better future, and long for a nobler condition of things, for a finer type of life, and a juster state. In all things we are saved by hope, and hope rarely fails the world for long.

(1) Even in our personal life we live much in the future, and if our thoughts of the future are right and our prospects are based on right foundations, that future of which we dream may be a source of strength and inspiration to us. If our hopes are grounded, as the Bible always grounds its hope, on moral foundations, if it is not a mere sluggard's paradise we are dreaming of, a selfish Eldorado where we imagine ourselves heaped with good fortune, every desire appeased and every whim satisfied; if we, on the contrary, see that peace can come only from righteousness and that lasting blessedness can come only from being worthy of blessedness, our dream may inspire us to follow the gleam, to strive after the highest.

(2) Our very wishes for each other at this time, when we have entered into another year, wishes of happiness and peace and prosperity, are of a piece with this vision of a time which can be truly called days of heaven upon the earth. When we have love in our hearts and think kindly of others and are full of generous desires for their good, when we wish men well, as we do from custom at this season, are we not just asking that this dream which we have traced through the whole Bible to some extent realized, and that earth might feel itself as a little bit of heaven? As men we dare not let go wishing and hoping and working for this, or we slide back to lower levels of thought and life. When our hearts are warm and we are moved to generous thought, we could almost use the very words as a prayer that those we love should find life for them during this New Year as the days of heaven upon the earth.

(3) But, that life may be as the days of heaven upon the earth, it must aim at things which are beyond the bite of the moth and the stain of the rust. It must have treasures which the thief cannot break through and steal. It

must know love and joy and peace, the strength of forgiveness, and the sweet content of service. It must covet the best gifts, and follow hard after them. Before the Kingdom of Heaven can come among us, we must come into the Kingdom. We must come humbly as a little child if we would even see the Kingdom. It is religion that man needs above all his other many needs, the vision of God, the faith and hope which stretch out after the unattained. When life loses religion it loses buoyancy and the impelling power, till it dwindles into frivolity or is swamped in grossness. These days of heaven upon the earth can never be reached by material progress, or by wealth even beyond the dreams of avarice. They are of the heart, conditioned by qualities of the heart. These days can come only when men surrender themselves to the will of God and live in His love.

Even now these days may be to us a present reality, if we but see what is the eternal fact—that 'to be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.' To live in the love of God, to walk in the light of His presence, is already to have attained the promise; for whenever a human soul takes God for his portion, heaven stoops down and touches earth and consecrates it, turning Luz, hard and stony and barren, into Bethel, the house of God, the gate of heaven. These commonplace days that will be told out day by day in the tale of this year can be glorified by a light that never was on sea or land if we are not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Make them as the days of the Son of Man, full of love and service and faith, and they will be days of heaven upon the earth.

¶ Of a young American, who has recently became an 'impassioned champion of personal religion,' Harold Begbie writes:—On no other subject is this fighting Virginian so glad to talk as the hilarity of the religious life. 'The gayest bunch of men I know,' he tells you, 'is the group that swings round F.B. They are fellows who have found something worth finding. We never meet but what we have a good time. This is far from the professional mirth of certain sorts of religious people. It is the laughter of men who really know there is a way out in this world, and who are doing their best to make it known to others.' No defence for such happiness is necessary. It is a happiness that cannot be helped. Do men gather thorns of vines or thistles of fig-trees? As the sun shines so does the heart of a man conscious of unity with his Creator, conscious, too, of power to change human life, rejoice with a joy unknown to the victims of delusion and the slaves of sin.[1]

The Golden Rose is blowing still,
  Is growing still, is glowing still,
In lowly vale, on lordly hill,
The Golden Rose is blowing still;—
  If only you can find it!

The Golden Rose still breaks and blows,
  Still breaks and blows, still gleams and glows,
'Mid icy blasts, and wintry snows,
The Golden Rose still breaks and blows;—
  Search well and you may find it!

The Golden Rose can never die,
  'Tis grafted on Eternity;
In hearts that Love doth glorify,
The Golden Rose can never die,—
  May it be yours to find it?[2]

## Self-Dispersal.

**Deut. xii. 13.—'Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest.'**

1. What would it have mattered, we are perhaps inclined to ask, if the Israelites *had* sacrificed upon these ready-made altars of the old heathenism? It would surely have done them no harm to have performed an act that was clearly a grateful and a pious act. Ah! but there was harm—the harm of self-dispersal. Faith may be too facile, feeling too fluent. There is a certain chastity of the emotion that is not to be lightly unveiled. It is not the man with whom speech is readiest who feels most, not the man most susceptible to the æstheticism of worship who brings to God the trembling

[1] H. Begbie, *Life Changers*, 169.
[2] John Oxenham.

rapture that has deeps in it, and profundities, and sacred secrecies.

(1) Who that has taken any interest in literature is not familiar with the sad spectacle of a certain dispersal of self which has often gone on in the lives of men of genius, and has been their ruin? The truly great writer is he who most accurately measures the nature of his gift and guards it with the most sacred vigilance. Such a man does his work in that spirit of sacredness which animated Milton when he prayed for the Holy Ghost to move his mind to utterance, and Wordsworth when he said that vows were made for him, and that he knew himself consecrate to poetry. Such a man will not permit himself to do anything less than his best. He works with a high ideal, and puts his finest conscience into all that he does. So far as the bulk of his work goes, it may be little or much, but no man can say of it that its least part is done with wilful slovenliness or indifference to the highest ideals. He toils in the same scrupulous spirit as those great mediæval artists who fashioned the parts of their work that would never be seen at all with the same perfect finish and fidelity as those that they knew would stand in the full glare of a critical publicity. Such men reserve themselves; they attain their greatness by the concentration, not the dispersion, of power; they would rather do one thing perfectly than a dozen things with only a fair measure of success. In the race for fame scores of men pass them, but they take no notice. They know that in the long run only the perfect thing endures, and they despise the 'loud impertinence' of a day's fleeting notoriety for the sake of that higher prize of immortality which they covet. They do not sacrifice on every altar that they see, they reserve themselves for that one highest thing which they can do best.

(2) There are men and women who have a sort of craze for versatility. They sit upon every committee, attend every meeting, speak on every subject. Their minds are cabinets of portable opinions, which they can produce at the shortest call. They would count the day ill spent, if they were not perpetually hurrying from engagement to engagement. The weekly diaries of their industry are appalling documents. They are good, well-meaning, industrious men; but after all their lives are a failure. Why? Because they have never learnt to practise a self-respecting reserve. One vehement conviction would carry them to a far nobler form of usefulness than all this fecundity of mere opinion. One cause that would absorb their utmost energy, that would fire and stir them into vehement enthusiasm, that would be for them the great purpose of all their living, would do more to mould their characters into heroism than all this glib advocacy of innumerable causes which have never really moved them. Such men carry no weight. When they speak they never cleave the mark as does the master-bowman. They are the mere utility men of parties and movements, to whom no one would think of entrusting the part of the great actor. As the world is ordered to-day, it is the specialist alone whose word carries weight, and the specialist is one who has concentrated himself upon one supreme aim, and reserved himself for one sacred and engrossing devotion.

¶ When John first settled at Silverstream, I was at Mosgiel—eight miles away—and I remember how sermon-tasters from far and near visited Silverstream to sample his wares. . . . The verdict was distinctly favourable. Indeed, it was out of that flattering verdict that the trouble arose. It was inevitable that so pleasing a speaker should be deluged with invitations. The villages were all around; the city was scarcely a dozen miles away. From city and hamlet invitations poured in. . . . Would he attend this function? Would he speak at this meeting? And to all the soirées and the anniversaries and the public meetings John went; and he always did well. His people were proud of the growing popularity of their young minister; Lilian [his wife] was proud of him; and for a while nothing but good came of it. . . . He conducted his Sunday services, which became each week more crowded. On Monday evening he met the young people of the congregation; on Wednesday he led the mid-week service. Two or three afternoons he spent in visiting among his people, and it was a great day in most of

their homes when he was their honoured guest. The rest of his time was devoured by what he was pleased to call his 'outside engagements.' He would jump up from the tea-table and hurry off to catch the train to town, in order to deliver the speech which he had spent the morning in preparing. Once or twice a week he would hear the sound of wheels at the gate, and, looking through the arching laburnums, would see the gig that was to bear him to a distant township. On those occasions he returned either at dead of night or after breakfast next morning. . . .

John had just celebrated the sixth anniversary of his ministry at Silverstream before things reached an acute stage. The crisis came suddenly, as crises usually do. Like a pack of hounds that rush all at once upon the baffled deer, fifty separate circumstances conspired to simultaneously convince John that he was managing life unwisely. It often happened by this time that he would be away from home for days together. He would leave Silverstream on Monday morning; speak at Grantham that night; deliver an address at Cranbrook on Tuesday; lecture at Haythorn on Wednesday; take part in the anniversary celebration at Winton on Thursday; and return home on Friday. By this method, as John explained to Lilian, a good deal of time was saved. It obviated the necessity for separate journeys to and from each place.

The first intimation that something was wrong came rather curiously. It happened that, one week, owing to a public holiday, and to a variety of contributing causes, John had no 'outside engagements.' To make up for lost time, he spent five afternoons visiting his people! The heart-to-heart talks and sacred confidences of those memorable afternoons strangely exhilarated him. It was good to listen again to the testimonies of the old people, to minister comfort to the sick and dying, and to gather the various households about the throne of the heavenly grace. John went back to the manse each evening with a singular glow upon his spirit. Six long mornings that week he devoted to his study, and the very books seemed glad to have him back again. He was present at the young people's meeting, and not only delivered an address freshly laid upon his heart by his morning's contemplation, but actually remained chatting with the members for half an hour afterwards! Everybody said that the mid-week service that Wednesday represented one of his finest efforts. There had often been signs of hasty preparation upon his Wednesday evening utterances. His people did not complain; they knew how terribly busy he was. But the finished and finely conceived address of that particular Wednesday evening was very refreshing and helpful. And then John actually spent three whole evenings that week in the old manse with Lilian and the children! On Friday he was sitting on the verandah with Myrtle on one knee and Jack on the other, whilst all the echoes were awakened by their shouts and laughter. His wife was sitting, knitting, on the step at his feet.

'Do you know, Lil,' he said, during a lull in the merriment, 'I was thinking this afternoon, as I drove home to tea, that this has been one of the happiest weeks I have ever spent!'

To his inexpressible amazement—women are strange creatures—she slipped her apron to her face, rose hastily from her lowly seat, and dived into the gloom of the hall. A little later, the twilight falling, she returned, with tell-tale eyes; took the children from his knee, and led them off to bed. And later still she again crept back stealthily to her old seat. But it was too dark to knit. Her head rested against his knee. He broke the silence by asking for an explanation of her tears.

'Well,' she said at last, 'I should never have said anything about it. You are the best judge, dear, as to where your duty lies. And, if you are doing your duty, it is not for me to murmur; I must help. It cannot be pleasant for you to be always travelling, and the least I could do was to bear my share of the burden without complaining. But, oh, John, I have been so lonely! And, when I have seen other men come home at sunset and play with their children, my heart has ached for ours. And then, when you said that the week you have spent with us all was one of the happiest you have ever known, it was more than I could bear. I cried for very joy!'[1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Silver Shadow*, 36ff.

2. The lesson becomes still more searching as we approach the moral and spiritual sphere. How pertinently does it apply, for example, to those affections which inhabit all human hearts and have so much to do with the determination of human destiny. Probably the most important of all questions for the youth who stands at the threshold of manhood is how he is going to treat that fund of affection which is in his heart and craves a corresponding affection. It is part of the unhappy cynicism of our day to jest at love and marriage; but if we think of them rightly and nobly we shall see that they are the greatest facts in life. The best men have always held them to be so, and there is something almost awe-inspiring in the intensity of that passion of love which has animated the best men and women. The love of Dante, of Tennyson, of Kingsley, for the women who were all in all to them is one of the divinest facts in human history, and one that has never failed to move the hearts of men. But why was it these men loved so intensely? How was it that this divine flame, which is so often dulled in the grim atmosphere of the world, burned in them with such purity and brightness? It was because they kept it intense by never dissipating it on unworthy fancies. They had not sacrificed on the wayside altar; they had reserved themselves for the great sacramental hour of a true and enduring passion. When they came to the true altar and the true temple, they brought to it hearts whose virginal freshness and depth of feeling had never been dulled or frittered, and the offering they laid upon the altar had no blemish.

But with how many men and women is the very reverse true? They do not reserve themselves: they pour out the precious spikenard of the heart on unworthy feet; they lose the first freshness and intensity of feeling for want of that self-reverence which sets a seal upon the heart and keeps it unsullied and serene; and then, when the true hour of love comes, they have not the power of loving nobly, and that hour strikes in vain. To men and women alike this doctrine of self-reservation applies; and as we practise it we shall find the true Divineness of love; as we fail in it we shall miss that rare and noble joy of affection which moves us so in lives such as Tennyson's and Kingsley's. 'Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest.' Don't waste yourself on those shallow indulgences of affection which leave the soul sterile, the heart empty. Reserve yourself, lest when you come to the true temple of love you have no offering, because it has been left upon the wayside altar.

3. It is but looking at the same picture with a certain deepening of the shadows to speak of those actually evil indulgences which stain the lives of men, and are in truth a hideous profanation of life at the wayside altar. We all know the popular theory about the sowing of wild oats. The main error that underlies the wild oats theory is this: we assume that a man may squander purity and still have enough of pure passion left in him to realize an intense and noble love; that, after sacrificing at every altar he sees through a profligate youth, he may ascend the very hill of God and find there what a Dante found, or a Kingsley. He cannot; he never will. The stain of the wayside altar is on him, and its leprosy will cleave to him for ever. It is a soul-stain; it is a thought-leprosy. He can bring to the great sacramental hour of life only a wasted heart. Diminished power of feeling, obstinate incapacity for loving in any great and noble way, the desire to love as pure men and women love, but without the power—is not that the true Nemesis of the wayside altar, and the most terrible harvesting of a man's wild oats?

¶ Attention was called the other day to what has often struck the student of art—the extraordinary differences in two well-known likenesses of Rembrandt, each painted by himself. They hang in the Louvre, and they tell the tragedy of a life. In the one Rembrandt paints himself as a young man 'full of life and courage, and in all the bravery of rich garments; the little moustache is twirled up audaciously, the bright brown eyes are alight with the foreknowledge of victory.' The other picture represents him as somewhere about fifty, prematurely aged; 'the dress is untidy, even dirty; an old cloth is on his head, a dis-

coloured rag round his throat; the moustache is draggled; patches of grey hairs grow like sedge round the jaws, and the searching eyes have become intensely sad, darkened, as it were, by the shadow of inevitable death.' It is an awful contrast. It is as though the great artist, out of the depth of an unimaginable despair, bade us look on this picture and on that. Before such a spectacle no words are needed; we recall that sad middle period of Rembrandt's life, with its public shame and scandal, and we know that he had sacrificed at the wayside altar. He himself knew it; and it surely must have been in some hour of poignant self-reproach that he took up his brush and with a master hand put upon the canvas that great and terrible lesson of his fall, which haunts us by its sadness and its tragedy.[1]

4. Come, lastly, to the more exclusively spiritual sphere, in which this counsel finds its highest application. Does it not suggest to us that true spirit of worship without which all worship is vain? The wayside altar may be for us the creed, the religious shibboleth, the ecclesiastical organization in which we were brought up. Or it may be the mere form of church-going, which we observe without any real sense of the solemnity of these weekly gatherings for praise or worship. To how many of us is this the real altar of the Highest, for which we reserve our true sacrifices? To how many of us is it a mere wayside altar, where we halt without thought, and which we approach without any true intensity of feeling? Is it not true that we often waste ourselves so completely upon the chance altars of life that it becomes impossible for us to rise to any real elevation of spiritual feeling, or to attempt any great spiritual task?

It is Christ Himself who calls us to this act of reserving ourselves for God, and Christ also is our example. How wonderful is that self-reservation which characterized His life! He hears while yet a boy the call of God, and then He returns to Nazareth, and for eighteen years silence covers Him as with a garment. Here is all Judæa and Galilee volcanic with suppressed patriotism, all kinds of movements and crusades of liberty, and stirrings of revolt—yet not a word from Christ! Why? Because Christ was reserving Himself for His true life-work. He had no strength to spend on the propagandas of an hour; these wayside altars could not seduce Him. His altar was Calvary, and to that He travelled. That was the sacred place where God waited for Him, and He knew it. And so, when the hour struck He was ready; He brought to it a soul fresh, undefiled, unwasted, and became the very Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world.

Calvary also is the altar where God awaits us. The one Divine sacrifice is the sacrifice of ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, and it is our reasonable service. Men talk of the pain of renouncing the world for Christ; far more terrible is the renunciation of Christ for the world. For to lose Christ is to lose ourselves; and to find Christ is to find both ourselves and Christ. To live for Christ, to walk in His light, to love and serve our fellow-creatures for His sake, this is life indeed; and let our prayer be the prayer of the old mystic poet—

O King of kings, give me such strength
  In this great war depending,
That I may here prevail at length,
  And ever be ascending,
Till I at last arrive at Thee
The Source of all felicity.

[1] W. J. Dawson.

## First Things First.

Deut. xii. 13, 14.—'Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose . . . thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings.'

THOSE who are familiar with *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* will remember a fine chapter in which Mark Rutherford uses the great words of this text. The scene is laid in the little Pike-street Chapel, and Mr. Bradshaw is the preacher. He had grown feeble with the weight of years, and he can preach but once on a Sunday; and to-day, as he stands before the little congregation, this is what he says: 'There are . . . in the Book of God universal truths, and the wonderful thing about them is,

that they are at the same time more particularly adapted to you and me and all our innermost wants than anything we can discover for ourselves. That is the miracle of inspiration. . . . Here is a word for us this morning: "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest." Ah! what a word it is! . . . For you and me this is not a warning against idolatry. What is it for us, then? Reserve yourself; discriminate in your worship. Reserve yourself, I say; but what is the implication? What says the next verse? "In the place which the Lord shall choose"; that is to say, keep your worship for the Highest. Do not squander yourself, but, on the other hand, before the shrine of the Lord offer all your love and adoration.'

1. 'Reserve yourself! Do not squander yourself! Keep your worship for the Highest! In the place which the Lord shall choose, there shalt thou offer thy burnt offerings. Not anywhere, not in every place that thou seest.' So run the great admonitions. And these would seem to be the merest counsels of prudence. A man is not likely to be concerned with coal when he can traffic in diamonds. When his house is in flames he will not think about his goods if his children are in peril. The sovereign things will dominate him. First things will have the first place. So we think, and so we say. And so we are assured, until we have a rude awakening as we watch men in hot pursuit of little, perishable things, quite oblivious of those august realities which are invested with immortal splendour. No man in his wits would set the superb genius of Raphael to paint a barn door, or engage Dante to write an election squib, or ask Mozart to compose the score for a barrel-organ. Nor do men construct a massive steam-hammer to crack nuts, or rear a stately castle to house pigs. These things betray a lack of proportion; there is a wide disparity between means and ends. There is a false emphasis. The perspective is wrong. Things are distorted; they are all exaggerated and awry.

In the sphere of ordinary life this thing is self-convicted. It stands out in arrestive and disturbing disjointure. Yet that is the familiar pathos, the obvious tragedy, which we see in the sphere of the highest. When a man is not conscious of life's deeper meaning, he will neglect all her lordliest things, and go out in the chase of a brilliantly painted butterfly, and lay waste his Divinest powers in the hot and perilous pursuit of those precarious pleasures that do not touch the deepest needs of his life. Well might Isaiah cry out, as if in stupefied amazement: 'Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?' Whence this mad futility? This utter lack of proportion? This perverse prostitution of the Divinest things to ends that fall so far beneath their predestined intention? And Isaiah's amazement is the incredulous wonder of all the prophets, from Moses and Æschylus to Browning and Ruskin.

¶ One day Mr. John Boyd, who had invented many valuable improvements for textile machinery, said to me as he walked in his garden, 'I have three great interests in life: the first is the Kingdom of God, the second is my political party, and the third is my inventions. And that is the order I like to keep them in.' So spake a holy man, *i.e.*, a hale man, a man living in healthy proportions.[1]

2. What are the first things? What are those great things that must command our first, our full, and our final allegiance? Let us listen to the moving words of our great, wise teachers, that, at least, we may begin to understand these things.

(1) Take a word of St. Paul. St. Paul is writing to the Corinthians. In that perplexing city one says: 'I am of Paul!' and another: 'I am of Apollos!' and emphasizes his limitation. He is confined, narrow, shut in. It is Apollos—but not Paul; Paul—but not Cephas; Cephas—but not Apollos. St. Paul says: It is not either Paul or Apollos, it is both. Comprehension, not exclusion, is the witness of greatness. Preferences there may be, but not expulsions. Catholicity is a finer thing than denominationalism. And that leads the Apostle to one of

[1] Donald Fraser.

those catholic utterances which so reveal the splendour of his soul. He leaps, with one bound, beyond his immediate argument, and with a certain exultance he cries: 'All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.' The breadth of the Christian religion, the variety and greatness of its interests, could hardly have a nobler expression. The Christian character is not that cramped thing that has so often masqueraded under its name—that weaves no spell, that has no charm; it is great and noble with a loftiness and beauty that surpasses even our dreams.

¶ Stanley was last with him [Livingstone], saw him at the closest of all quarters—African travel, blistered feet, and vertical rays. The great analysts would have revelled in this chance Stanley had to find out just *what* had tamed this tiger. And here is what it all ends in: 'The wan features,' says Stanley, 'which had shocked me at first meeting, the heavy step which told of age and hard travel, the grey beard and bowed shoulders, belied the man. Underneath that well-worn exterior lay an endless fund of high spirits and inexhaustible humour; that rugged frame of his enclosed a young and most exuberant soul. In him, religion exhibits its loveliest features; it governs his conduct not only towards his servants, but towards the natives, the bigoted Mohammedans, and all who come in contact with him. *Without it,* Livingstone, with his ardent temperament, his enthusiasm, his high spirit and courage, must have become uncompanionable, and a hard master. Religion *has tamed him,* and made him a Christian gentleman: the crude and wilful have been refined and subdued; religion has made him the most companionable of men and indulgent of masters—a man whose society is pleasurable.' [1]

(2) Or take another great word, also of St. Paul, a word which by its wise sanity has appealed to the mind of the world. He is writing to the Philippians, and suddenly, in golden words, he sets out the height and depth, the breadth and length of the Christian interest. 'Finally,' he cries, 'whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.' There is the glory of the Christian heritage. It is not a little garden with a few sickly flowers. It is not a sullen sky, with one Pole star trembling in its vast darkness. Not a bad world, in which a man has but one interest, and that how he can get out of it. It is a garden full of opulent beauty and bewitching sweetness, a sky crammed full of glorious stars, a life wide in its range, deep in its interests, and everywhere invested with fascination and charm. He betrays the glory of the Christian character who reveals it as a shrivelled, unromantic thing, and teaches men to be blind to its daring venture, its great achievements, its splendid ministry and its calm and holy peace.

¶ Goodness which is not radiant has something the matter with it. Goodness which, however impeccable, makes life seem cramped, pinched, restrained and unhappy is not real goodness. Such good people are often exasperating nuisances. One who has to deal with them understands the little girl's prayer: 'O God, make all the bad people good—and make all the good people nice!' [1]

(3) And if one other word be necessary, let it be that great transcendent word of our Lord. He had set before His disciples life's inevitable dilemma, the alternative which, sooner or later, every man has to confront—'No man can serve two masters!' 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon!' And then He utters the great command, which is also the great persuasion—'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.' There is a Kingdom, a whole and vast realm, in which God is the sovereign Lord. It is the home of all the beauties, all the glories, all the delights, of all those great things for which the heart hungers and for which the soul has such passionate desires, the place where the eternal hopes move to their complete fruition and the abiding satisfactions for ever dwell. And that is to be set in the first place, to be

[1] Dan Crawford, *Back to the Long Grass*, 290.

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 71.

life's lode-star, its one sacred passion and desire. It is not a little thing, with temporary bewitchment, with perishable attractions, but a thing that is great, whose splendour is the incitement of man's noblest powers, the realization of his deepest and holiest intention. Jesus did not tantalize His disciples with the pettiness that others know so well how to use. He lured them, He sustained them, He inspired them with the immortal glory of God.

## The Utmost Cruelty.

Deut. xiv. 21.—'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.'

This striking prohibition occurs three times—twice in the Book of Exodus, and once in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Most commentators hold that there must be other than humanitarian motives behind the law. It occurs among the laws on ritual, and this would imply that the practice had a sacramental meaning and that the prohibition was aimed against some superstitious custom—probably that of using milk thus prepared as a charm for rendering fields and orchards more productive. This interpretation notwithstanding, the prohibition may be taken at its face value, for boiling a lamb or kid in milk is a recognized Arab custom. When an Arab, says Mr. F. W. Boreham, wished to adorn his table with a particularly toothsome morsel, it was his habit to serve up the kid boiled in milk taken from the mother. It was against this favourite and familiar dish that the stern and repeated prohibition was launched. Some of the old commandments relating to animals seem to have been framed for no other purpose than to inculcate a certain gentleness and courtesy in our attitude toward these poorer relatives of ours. 'Thou shalt not kill a cow and her calf on the same day'; 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn'; and so on. It is difficult to see any real reason why the ewe and her lamb, or the cow and her calf, should not go to the shambles together. But it was strictly forbidden. The finer feelings are certainly shocked at the thought of the cow and the calf going together to the slaughter, and at the idea of boiling the newly born and newly slain kid in the milk of its mother; and the most obvious moral seems to be that we are not to treat the creatures of the field and the forest in any way that grates and jars upon those finer instincts.

1. But the prohibition goes much farther than that. It enshrines a tremendous principle, a principle that is nowhere else so clearly stated. Sir Walter Scott evidently saw that; we find it clearly stated in *Kenilworth*. The circumstances were, briefly, these. The Countess of Leicester was a prisoner. Just outside her room at the castle was a trap-door. It was supported by iron bolts; but it was so arranged that even if the bolts were drawn, the trap-door would still be held in its place by springs. Yet the weight of a mouse would cause it to yield and to precipitate its burden into the vault below. Varney and Foster decided to draw these bolts so that, if the Countess attempted to escape, the trap would destroy her. Later on, Foster heard the tread of a horse in the court-yard, and then a whistle similar to that which was the earl's usual signal. The next moment the Countess's chamber opened, and instantly the trap-door gave way. There was a rushing sound, a heavy fall, a faint groan, and all was over! At the same instant Varney called in at the window, 'Is the bird caught? Is the deed done?' Deep down in the vault Foster could see a heap of white clothes, like a snowdrift. It flashed upon him that the noise that he had heard was not the Earl's signal at all, but merely Varney's imitation, designed to deceive the Countess and lure her to her doom. She had rushed out to welcome her husband, and had miserably perished. In his indignation, Foster turned upon Varney. 'Oh, if there be judgment in heaven, thou hast deserved it,' he said, 'and wilt meet it! Thou hast destroyed her by means of her best affections. *It is a seething of the kid in the mother's milk!*'

At that touchstone the inner meaning of the interdict stands revealed. The mother's milk is Nature's beautiful provision for the life and sustenance of the kid. Thou shalt not pervert that which was intended to be a ministry

of life into an instrument of destruction. The wifely instinct that led the Countess to rush forth to welcome her lord was one of the loveliest things in her womanhood, and Varney used it as the agency by which he destroyed her. She was lured to her doom by means of her best affections. Charles Lamb points out, in his *Tales from Shakespeare,* that Iago compassed the death of the fair Desdemona in precisely the same way. 'So mischievously did this artful villain lay his plots to turn the gentle qualities of this innocent lady into her destruction and make a net for her out of her own goodness to entrap her!' It is this that the prohibition forbids. Thou shalt not take the most sacred things in life and apply them to base and ignoble ends. *Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.*

2. The possibilities of application are simply infinite. There is nothing high and holy that cannot be converted into an engine of destruction. A girl is fond of music. The impulse is a lofty and admirable one. But it may easily be used to lure her away from the best things into a life of frivolity, voluptuousness, and sensation. A boy is fond of Nature. He loves to climb the mountain, row on the river, or scour the bush. Nothing could be better. But if it leads him to forsake the place of worship, to forget God, to fling to the winds the faith of his boyhood, and to settle down to a life of animalism and materialism, he has been destroyed by means of his best affections. Or take our love of society and of revelry. There are few things more enjoyable than to sit by the fireside or on the beach with a few really congenial companions; to talk, and tell stories, and recall old times; to laugh, to eat, and to drink together. Talking and laughing and eating and drinking seem inseparable at such times. And yet out of that human, and therefore Divine, impulse see the evils that arise! Look at our great national drink curse, with its tale of squalor and misery and shame! Did these men mean to be drunkards when first they entered the gaily lit bar-room? Nothing was farther from their minds. They were following a true instinct—the desire for companionship and congenial society. They have been lured to their doom, like Sir Walter Scott's heroine, by means of their best affections.

3. And what about love? Love is a lovely thing, or why should we be so fond of love-stories? The love of a man for a maid, and the love of a maid for a man, are surely among the very sweetest and most sacred things in life. No story is so fascinating as the story of a courtship. And that is good, altogether good.

Every man who has won the affection of a true, sweet, beautiful girl feels that a new sanction has entered into life. He is conscious of a new stimulus towards purity and goodness. And every girl who has won the heart of a good, brave, great-hearted man feels that life has become a grander and a holier thing for her. As Tennyson says:

> Indeed I know
> Of no more subtle master under heaven
> Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
> Not only to keep down the base in man,
> But to teach high thoughts and amiable words,
> And courtliness, and the desire for fame,
> And love of truth, and all that makes a man.

Lord Lytton illustrates this magic force in his *Last Days of Pompeii.* He tells us that Glaucus, the Athenian, 'had seen Ione, bright, pure, unsullied, in the midst of the gayest and most profligate gallants of Pompeii, charming rather than awing the boldest into respect, and changing the very nature of the most sensual and the least ideal as, by her intellectual and refining spells, she reversed the fable of Circe, and converted the animals into men.' Here, then, is something altogether good. It is clearly designed to minister new life to all who come beneath its spell. And yet the sordid fact remains that, through the degradation of this same high and holy impulse, thousands of young people make sad shipwreck.

4. But of all things designed to minister life to the world, the Cross is the greatest and most awful. Its possibilities of regeneration are simply infinite; and in its case the danger is therefore all the greater. 'We preach Christ crucified,' wrote Paul, 'unto the Jews a

stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.' It is the most urgent and insistent note of the New Testament that a man may convert into the instrument of his condemnation and destruction that awful sacrifice which was designed for his redemption. It is the sin of sins; the sin unpardonable; the sin so impressively forbidden by that ancient and thrice reiterated commandment.[1]

O sov'reign Body broken on the tree,
Mine is the traitor kiss that hangs Thee there:
Yea, and the garden of Thy pale despair
My heart's Gethsemane,

That garden where, upon the darkling sward
Drunk with the greed of hell, the wage of death,
Stealing upon Thee, with her treacherous breath
My soul betrays her Lord.

Lo! mine the anguish of Thy piercéd side,
My malice is that spear that woundeth Thee;
Yet for Thy recreant lover, Lord, for me,
In silence Thou hast died.

Still move Thy gentle lips to love and rue,
While round Thee mock the children of Thy pain,
'Forgive them, Father, for their hearts' disdain,
They know not what they do.'

Breathe now, dear Jesus, as Thy darkness falls
The peace no terrors quench, no pains dismay;
Bring me, all-crucified, with Thee to-day
Into Thy Father's halls.[2]

[1] F. W. Boreham.
[2] D. F. G. Johnson.

## The Poor.

**Deut. xv. 11.—'The poor shall never cease out of the land.'**

And they never have ceased since these words were spoken. Judging from the accumulated experience of the far-reaching past there will be poor among us so long as this present dispensation shall continue. No schemes, however philanthropic, no theories, however elaborate, will rid the world of the poor. Our blessed Lord Himself recognized poverty as a social fact, not to be deprecated, not to be urged as an argument against the existence of a benevolent Supreme Being, not to be pointed to as a grave defect in His system, but as what might be called 'a standing order,' not without its justification and appointed end: 'Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good.'

The contrast between wealth and poverty, the apparent advantages one class enjoys over another, the inequalities of social life, the yawning gulf which seems hopelessly or unfairly to separate Dives from Lazarus in our congested cities or rural districts, the wealth of Belgravia and the destitution of Bethnal Green, the lordly mansions in the midst of extensive parks towering over the modest dwellings of the agricultural labourers, are contrasts that have existed since civilized life first began, and exist in their measure even where life is not yet civilized. But, whether under the thoughtful Mosaic system, or under that of Him who came 'not to destroy but to fulfil,' such contrasts were not to be made occasions of unreasoning complaint, incentives to anarchism, or good and sufficient excuse for setting class against class, and widening the breach between them. In vain does the political agitator or social incendiary 'search the Scriptures' for texts which, honestly interpreted, justify those outrages which only forfeit sympathy, or for anything which warrants extreme measures purely on the ground of these marked contrasts and inequalities. What is more evident and confessed than the varied and diverse distribution of God's gifts and endowments in creation?

It does not appear that the thought and purpose of God is of 'levelling up,' of a complete effacement of social inequalities, of Communism as preached by some, or of Socialism as advocated by others, but such a view of these contrasts as shall give scope and room for our purest sympathies, shall encourage mutual consideration, and shall be the corrective of thoughtless selfishness.

1. The grave and pressing question is, What is our Christian faith, as preached and practised, doing for and with the poor? Is it, or is it not, leavening the lump? If it is not, why not? If it is, how can it leaven it until the whole lump be leavened? If righteousness exalt a nation, and sin be a reproach unto any people, what lies in our power to further righteousness, and what to remove the reproach of sin? Is it possible for a poor man to be a religious man? Can the wage-earning class, harassed, borne down with earthly cares, lift up holy hands? Can they who toil under exacting conditions be not only moral but devout? Is practical heathenism a necessity of crowded life, and to live without God in the world the inevitable outcome of oppressive poverty?

¶ I cannot persuade myself that if to the poor the Gospel is preached the poor cannot receive the message. I see wallflowers and lichens growing out of sterile rocks, and cactus living amid tropical suns; these have secret supplies of moisture. Is it not difficult to believe that God would have any human life, or any condition of it, incompatible with holiness? I believe it is also to do a great injustice to the poor to characterize them as irreligious as a body, or as generally averse to, though they may be estranged from, it. They will walk for miles over hill and moor and dale to hear the tidings of the Gospel when simply told. The hold our parish churches have and retain on the affections of our people is deep and strong. . . . No man had larger opportunities for forming an unprejudiced opinion on this subject than the late Lord Shaftesbury. He over and over again bore testimony to the readiness of the very poorest to receive religious instruction. Nowhere have I had more attentive listeners than in thieves' kitchens and tramps' lodging-houses. But, for all this, it must stand confessed that a very large proportion—some say seventy-five per cent. of our population—attend no place of worship. The Church of England, save in a few exceptional cases, does not lure them. Nonconformity is affected by the middle classes, not by the very poor. At any given place of worship the poor are conspicuous by their absence. The heathenism at home is constantly quoted as a blot on our Christianity, a hindrance to its larger diffusion abroad, a serious and menacing danger in our midst. How can it be otherwise if seventy-five per cent. of a population be unreached and unleavened by the influence of religion?[1]

2. Not a few causes are at work which in some measure account for the estrangement of the poor from, or their apparent indifference to, religion. The dreary monotony of a certain class of labour is prejudicial to spirituality. For some human beings a considerable portion of their nature is dwarfed, undeveloped, unused. Long hours of the same work, in the same crowded room, in the same vitiated atmosphere, create the craving for change, however temporary. The body wearied out, the mind jaded, both demand what church or chapel do not supply. Certain sedentary employments have their distinct tendencies. Employment indoors, spread over many hours, creates, of necessity, the craving for fresh air, freedom from the restraint of walls, a longing for recreation and amusement. The lad in the mills kicks off his restrained life on football fields. The sempstress longs for a dance in the cheap music hall or penny gaff. Some look forward to Sunday as a day of rest, of prolonged slumber, of quiet inaction. The collier indulges in his bulldog or fox-terrier fights; the navvy in a good sound sleep. Coarse or harmless as the form may be that their amusement takes, we cannot interfere with it, any more than we would be interfered with. One pressing problem is to provide healthy recreation, harmless amusement for our poor, so to abbreviate the hours of labour that the poor may

[1] F. Pigou.

have more leisure, and then to endeavour, as far as we may without interfering with their liberty, to help them to learn how to use enlarged leisure profitably. Is there not room here for the more advantaged and cultured in life to lighten the leisure hours of their fellow-creatures?

3. What shall we say of the effect and force of example on the part of too many of the 'upper classes,' which cannot but filtrate down to the lower strata of social life? Look at the increasing desecration of God's holy day on their part. The poor hear and read of 'Church Parades' and 'Prayer Book Parades,' where are exhibited the latest fashions; of dinner-parties at home, boating-parties on the Thames; of lawn-tennis here and holiday excursions there, and of no restriction of any kind set to self-pleasing. They fret under the class legislation which allows one man to have his wine at any hour at his club, but closes the public-house within certain hours to the poor. Consider the cost of a single entertainment in Belgravia, or at the Mansion House, and human beings within the same city wanting the very necessaries of daily life! Take up the society papers and read of the extravagances of society butterflies, when thousands can scarcely keep body and soul together, and live at starvation point! Look at the spurious provocatives to charity encouraged even by some of our bishops, so contrary to the Scripture rules concerning charity, and for which no sanction whatever may be found in the Word of God! What are bazaars, and charity dinners, and balls for hospitals but spurious methods of so-called charity? Is it come to this, in a professedly Christian land, that you cannot give 'hoping for nothing again'? A bazaar and dramatic performance for the administration of the Word and Sacraments! Must I sit down to an elaborate meal under royal patronage in order that orphans may be clothed and fed? Can I not bring myself to support a hospital where lie the sick and dying unless I have a dance and a champagne supper? How shall we ever persuade those already estranged from religion that this, so travestied, so misrepresented, so adulterated, is the Christianity of its Founder?

4. 'Problems of the poor!' Yes, to be faced and dealt with; but not by utopian schemes, artificial wages, repressive measures, impracticable theories, doubtful methods. It is not by any one of these that we shall bridge over a widening gulf or dam up the rising tide of a revolutionary bitterness. Thank God! much is being done to leaven the lump. All honour to those who would improve the housing of the people, enforce sanitary laws, encourage thrift, lighten weary hours and monotonous toil! Free concerts, working men's clubs and institutes, mothers' meetings, Bands of Hope and Mercy, sewing classes for girls, healthy counter-attractions—all honour to the army of workers who thus labour! But next to that preaching of the gospel which no one of these agencies can really dispense with or supersede, is it not the great need of our times that we realize more fully the brotherhood of our humanity, which is neither Socialism nor Communism, but that we are all one in Christ? The demand of our time is not a new creed, as if Christianity were played out, but life and reality put into the creed we have, men and women, first themselves converted, witnessing for Christ. Wherein lay the secret of Christ's power among men? It lay in His *touch*. He did not *send* salvation. He himself *brought* salvation. He was nailed to the tree. He came into loving, close personal contact with sadness, sorrow and sin; He touched lepers, put His fingers into the ears of the deaf, anointed the eyes of the blind with His own hand. Humanity felt the power and reality of that sympathetic *touch*. We are not to look for miracles to be done *for* the Church, we are to look for wonders wrought *by* the Church; by those who profess Christ's name living out their creed in loving and practical sympathy.

¶ The Society of Jesus has never come into being. This is the tragedy of the Christian centuries, it is still the tragedy of the twentieth. Excepting in groups, the Brotherhoods and Fellowships of history, the Company of the followers of Jesus has failed to utilise the vital and vitalising force of a body so united.

The intention has been persistently conventionalised and minimised; more or less frankly we have chosen who shall be our brothers, we are often at war with our brothers, it would be easier to do anything for some brothers than simply to be their brother. The proposition of the Kingdom of God is still the proposition of brotherhood.[1]

## The Use of Remembrance.

Deut. xvi. 3.—'Remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt.'

THERE is a definiteness about this commandment of God which gives to it something more than was intended in those general appeals to the people's memory which we find in this Book. The Israelites—now settled in communities, free from the dangers of the wilderness, beginning indeed to be rich and at their ease—the Israelites are here commanded not only to recall, as a spiritual discipline and precaution, the whole story of their wonderful career under God; they are here asked to recall the very day on which they left Egypt behind them, and set forth as freemen in a new country, with the sea rolling between them and the scenes of their degradation. They are asked not so much to let their minds wander idly over a long number of years, selecting this incident and that according to their own taste; they are asked to concentrate their minds upon one definite point of time, upon a definite day in the long story of God's dealing with them. They are asked, for the time being, to shut out everything else, to shut out the days that followed, and to remember, in all its intensity and detail, that one day on which they escaped from the tyranny of Egypt and entered into the liberty of men. And this they are to do regularly. Once, at least, every year they are to remember that one particular day. And they are to remember it not in any casual way, or hurriedly or impatiently. They are to remember it patiently and deliberately. And in order that the memory of that day, with all its holy significance and wise teaching, may have its highest power over them, they are to surround themselves with such things as will assist their memory. The very food they eat on that memorial day is to be of the plainest, like the food their fathers were glad to eat on that great day of their escape.

Let us think of the effect such recollection was likely to have upon these Hebrews.

1. Putting themselves into the very circumstances of their fathers they would imagine, until it was as though they themselves had taken part in it, the stir and expectation of that day. It had long been talked of. It had long been delayed. Many a time it had been on the point of coming, when something had occurred to hinder it. But at last it had come. They looked round upon the things with which they had long been familiar. As they bethought themselves that they were never going to see those hateful things again, they became afraid lest it was too good to be true. Then the setting out—the intolerable joy. Then the rumour that Pharaoh was pursuing them—and the horrible fear. Then the intervention of God—the great cloud coming down in front of Pharaoh. Then the weird crossing of the sea by night. Then, next morning, the rising of the sun—with no Pharaoh behind them, with Pharaoh, and Egypt, and slavery with its lashes and its ignominy all past and done with.

They would imagine all that, until—such is the wonderful value of our souls when we put them to the use that God intended—until the joy and thanksgiving of their fathers became their own emotion, and they found themselves applying the old story to their own circumstances—fighting some battle of their own by the help of their fathers' faith, escaping from some bondage of their own by the help of the ancient song of Moses and of Miriam. That is one blessing that would come upon them from recalling, in this strong and definite way, the day when they came forth out of the land of Egypt.

2. Another blessing would be this: they would get into their souls something of the hatred of Egypt which had moved their fathers. There is a very great danger that we idealize things which our fathers held to be evil and

[1] Annie H. Small, *The Kingdom and the King*, 93.

nothing but evil. We should always be on our guard if we find ourselves defending, or making compromises with, things which our fathers condemned. It does not follow that we in our day are called upon to condemn the same things. They are not necessarily loyal to their fathers who say the same things as their fathers said. They alone are loyal to their fathers who contend for the same principles. Certainly there is a danger that we to-day gloss over the bitter and dishonouring things of the past, in obedience to a kind of liberality of the mind which rests not upon an examination of the past but upon a total disregard of the past, and a too great subservience to some present-day fashion. We are apt to idealize the past, and in a sense we ought to keep alive, not the dark things, but the bright things in our own history and in the history of mankind. But this is not to say that we are to deceive ourselves and to run once again into bondages and snares from which only at an expenditure of blood our fathers were delivered.

¶ We owe it to our ancestors to preserve entire those rights which they have delivered to our care: we owe it to our posterity not to suffer their dearest inheritance to be destroyed.[1]

3. These words, 'Remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt,' are capable of a more personal application. Is there not a very great danger that we begin to think in a slack and consenting way of things in the region of our behaviour which at one time we shrank from, or repented of most passionately if we were guilty of them. There is no greater danger besetting us than just this, of falling into a lazy way of considering things which, in the fresher days of our youth, we held to be wrong and nothing but wrong. Our tendency as we get older is to lose our *heat*—our heat for loving, and our heat for hating. Let us all be on our guard against this treachery to the higher moral judgment of our own fresh and unsophisticated days.

How easily one may fall into a slack way of regarding some definite sin of his own past life! There was a day when he was afraid of it, when he was afraid of himself for having indulged it, or for being capable of such a transgression. In that day he knew the bitterness of his own soul; and certain fears as deep as our nature—nay, deeper than our nature, for they have their source in God—certain fears gathered about him. In the loneliness of his moral distress he sought the Lord, and there, in simple faith in Christ, he accepted the forgiveness of God. It was a great day—that day when the past was past, when something which had mastered him, and tyrannized over him, had shamed and entangled him, lay dead behind him.

He can recall the peace of his spirit then, his holy resolutions which are all recorded in heaven. But time has passed—time which threatens every warmth of the soul. He begins to think that perhaps he was too scrupulous, too serious. Perhaps he was trying to live on a higher level than is really possible in this world. Perhaps he was never so bad as he thought. Certainly there must be many other people who were as bad or worse, and who never repented, or thought they needed to repent.

And so on and on a man may argue, not knowing that at every stage of his argument he is sinking down and down, falling out of the hands of God. What shall we say to such a man? What shall I say to myself? Soul, beware! If thou wilt look back, look back not idly, nor carelessly. Look back strongly. Remember the very day when thou didst leave that Egypt. Remember thine old shame, thine old horror at thyself, and take that, and only that, as the reality of the matter. And cast not aside that holy experience of the saving power of Christ, which on that day was thy one star in a dismal night!

¶ For six-and-thirty years you have been in this world. I will propose one single question, and as you answer I will read to you your moral horoscope. You have grown in many things more lax. . . . But granting that, are you in any one particular, however trifling, more difficult to please with your own conduct, or do you go in all things with a looser rein.[1]

[1] Junius.

[1] R. L. Stevenson.

## The Day of Days.

Deut. xvi. 3.—'Remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt.'

One definite day the men of Israel were enjoined to remember. What a day it was—the conclusion of the long bondage, the beginning of individual freedom, the birth and inauguration of national life! If they forgot that, they were destitute of every spark of gratitude and grace. In like manner, we who are Christ's have behind us one day, special and signal, which stands high above the rank and file of its neighbours—the day when our nets were broken and we escaped, the day when a Greater than Moses led us from a slavery worse than Egypt, the day of the salvation of our souls. Perhaps we cannot fix it exactly on the calendar; some of us can, but not all. Yet each can speak of a personal experience, if not of a precise date. If we are unable to put our finger on the moment, we are convinced of the fact. The power and the love of our Lord, we say, terminated our serfdom, and conducted us into His glorious liberty. It is to the music of this supreme and blessed experience that all our days are to be set.

1. It was a day of *Divine miracle.* On it God made bare His arm in marvellous omnipotence. His sword smote the firstborn, till a bitter cry went up from the four corners of the land, and the oppressors in their desperation urged the oppressed to hasten and flee. His wind blew and scattered Pharaoh and his chariots, and they sank as lead in the mighty waters. There are days in a nation's life when the powers and splendours of Heaven reveal themselves so conspicuously that there is no eluding their presence; and this was one of these. There are similar days in the soul's life; and among them the period of conversion stands in the front and foremost place. Then God did everything. He overcame those unearthly and unsparing Egyptians that were too strong for us—the ill-desert of our sin, the holy sentence written against us, and the condemnation from which, with all our contriving and laboriousness and self-discipline, we could not extricate ourselves. He interposed on behalf of the helpless. Infinitely wise and resourceful He showed Himself, as well as infinitely gracious and tender, to redeem the poor captives caught in meshes and snares from which there was no deliverance except His own.

2. It was a day of *implicit faith.* Faith is the response on our side to miracle on God's side. When He achieves something which is matchlessly beyond our attainment we answer Him—for we can do nothing else—with an unquestioning trust. With our empty hands and our wondering and rejoicing spirits, we receive the privilege and the wealth He has provided. When Israel left Egypt, not only were the people dependent on the might, the wisdom, and the grace of God, but the mode and method of their outgoing were arranged and prescribed for them by Him. The death of the Paschal lamb; the sprinkling of the blood on doorpost and lintel; the passing over of the destroying angel; the eating of the feast, sandalled for the road and with staff in hand—the procedure was His from first to last, and the ransomed men had merely to accept it and to obey. So it was when,

> from Egypt lately come,
> Where death and darkness reign,
> We sought our new, our better home.

We sought it, but solely in the way of consenting to what He had devised and prepared. For us a nobler Lamb was sacrificed, a more precious Blood was shed, and in it and Him our confidence was reposed. Christ was our Shelter, and Christ our Food. He screened us from the impending death. He supplied all our need. We trusted Him, and God who was manifest in Him; and the great iron gates of our prison opened to us of their own accord, and we were free.

3. It was a day of *emphatic farewell.* For there is a human complement to those superhuman activities and benedictions. God does everything for us; it is a truth which admits of no abatement, and a joy which is never to

be pared down or whittled away. But He asks this of us—that we should fall in with, and consent to, and approve of, and delight in, that which He does. The day that *thou* camest forth: you notice the suggestive pronoun. He did it all; but *thou* saidst thy Yes to Him, *thou* gavest Him His own irresistible and compassionate and glorious way, *thou* wast unfeignedly glad thyself to be done with the Egypt from which He rescued thee. Israel was incontestably glad that day; but Israel forgot its gladness soon. The people lost sight of the despotism, the misery, and the shame of the house of bondage. In the wilderness they recalled only its onions and leeks and garlic, the external plenty and the carnal comfort of the homes of their tyrants. Plainly, the farewell had not been emphatic enough.

A danger as terrible follows the Christian. Time runs on, and time blurs that which used to be so distinct, and trivializes that which used to be so precious. We lose, not altogether but far too much, the sense of the magnitude of our redemption, and the sense of the misery of the world we left behind. Our judgments are no longer fresh, sensitive, and keen. Their edge is blunted; their vigour has fallen into slackness. Egypt had its tingling pleasures for flesh and blood; and was Egypt so irrecoverably wrong, we ask, that it must be abjured without any reserves? But when we argue so, we are on the brink of the precipice. We tremble on the very verge of Peter's denial—a denial of the Lord who bought us to be the people of His own possession. Let us be afraid. And let us reiterate again and again the unequivocal good-bye, the 'adieu for evermore,' of that hour when, by the grace of God, we came forth from captivity. Our horror at ourselves, our crucifixion of ourselves, our abandonment of ourselves for the safe-keeping of Jesus Christ, should be more than the impulse and incident of a moment; they should be the attitude and the practice of a lifetime. The day of emphatic farewell to sin, and of absolute surrender to One who lifts us high above sin's allurement, will not close until we are walking in white with Him through the country into which there enters nothing that defiles.

¶ Says Dr. Welsh in *Man to Man*[1]: Professor James's rules for this reversal of our ways are sound and practical.

'Launch yourself on the new course with as strong an initiative as possible.' Cut clear of the associations which may mean peril to your purpose. Give public pledges and hostages binding and committing you; 'burn your boats behind you,' to prevent retreat in some moment of revulsion. When Dr. Jekyll made up his mind to have done with the hateful life he carried on in the form of Mr. Hyde, he did not destroy the cup and the liquid which enabled him to transform himself in a safe disguise. Destroy the cup and 'make no provision for the flesh.'

'Never suffer an exception to occur till the new habit is securely rooted in your life.' A single lapse is 'like the letting fall of a ball of string which one is winding up; a single slip undoes more than a great many turns will wind again.'

'Seize the very first possible opportunity to act on every resolution you make, and on every emotional prompting you may experience in the direction of the habits you aspire to gain.' The better impulse is not safe until it has been set to active work and crystallised. Go on and force yourself to act on it, even when something in you harks back. Every such action is a new victory won, and entrenches you behind a higher rampart of practice. So the very nerve and moral fibre in you acquires the new habit. Your trust in God and His Saviour-Son must be backed up by such practical aids and sensible safeguards.

## The Feast of Tabernacles.

(HARVEST).

Deut. xvi. 13.—'Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine.'

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, in the autumn of the year, when all the chief fruits of the ground—the corn and the oil and the wine—were gathered in, this 'Feast of the Ingathering' was to be kept. It was the 'harvest-home' of the House of Israel. One of

[1] P. 139.

the peculiarities of the feast was that during the seven days it lasted the people were commanded to dwell in booths or huts formed of the boughs of trees. When the feast was kept in Jerusalem these were constructed in the courts and on the roofs of the houses, in the court of the Temple, in the street of the water-gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. The boughs used were those of the olive, the palm, the pine, the myrtle, and other trees with thick foliage.

All the Hebrew feasts were seasons of rejoicing, but this was the gladdest and brightest of them all. The free life in the open air in a beautiful clime, the meeting of old friends parted by long distances at other times, the huts all over the city, the fruits and palms carried by everyone, made the streets gay by day; and at night the lamps, torches, and music, together with the joyful gatherings in the courts of the Temple, gave a festive character to the whole scene.

This joyful feast was kept year by year by the whole people at the special command of God Himself. We see, therefore, that in setting apart a day for the thankful remembrance of the ingathering of the fruits of the earth we are strictly within the lines of Scripture teaching. We ought most heartily to keep such a feast, not only because it was Divinely appointed under the Old Covenant, but also because the reasons for such a commemoration hold good for us as well as for the Jews.

1. It was a time of *social reunion.* Families long separated intermingled. Friend met friend. The social circle widened. Religion from its very nature is promotive of good fellowship. It brings heart nearer to heart, and binds people in bands of love and social life. The family feeling was cultivated to an extreme extent among the Jews, and the genealogical line was preserved with the greatest care. But this festival carried the gregarious feeling beyond the family. Hospitality was exercised and friendly interchanges gave new joy to the season, and thus brotherhood as a humane sentiment was developed and encouraged. All this was both a prelude and a symbol of the fellowship by which the Christian Church was to be characterized, of the brotherhood which all believers were to enjoy with each other in Christ. Fellowship, social life and brotherhood were established as essential elements of the life of the first Christian Church, and they have, in varying degrees, been preserved to this day. Churches have been happy and prosperous in proportion as they have cultivated a true religious communion among all their members; and to a large degree the existence of healthy churches depends upon the encouragement of this Divine arrangement. In a delightful way this sentiment was preserved in the Jewish commonwealth by the great harvest festival.

¶ The holiest and the happiest hours of a long and happy college life were the hours I spent in the Students' Missionary Association, a Society with an object very much akin to your own—the inciting and fostering a spirit of piety among the students. Never shall I forget the thrilling sense of delight that oftentimes pervaded my frame; the heavenly calm and quiet that filled my whole soul, when as the grey evening twilight with its pensive and religious melancholy descended upon the old walls, and hovered among the old trees of St. Mary's, the fervent prayer was breathed from the lips of a fellow-student, or our simple song of praise ascended up to heaven. Amid all the kindly memories, amid all the hallowed associations connected with my Alma Mater, there is none so gladdening to me as these. How could I forget those hours when the atmosphere of a better world was floating about me, when the din of the busy earth was hushed and the sounds of strife were still, and when the echo of our psalms seemed music from the better land? These hours were a foretaste of the joys of eternity. That joy was produced by the feeling of deep sympathy with those around me, as we were engaged together in the solemn services of devotion. It nerves the soul to holy purposes and lofty deeds to know that there are kindly hearts beating in unison with ours, sharing in our loves and hopes and fears. That sympathy which the soul of man is ever seeking is drawn out and quickened by such societies as yours.[1]

[1] *Dr. MacGregor of St. Cuthberts*, 22.

2. It was a time of *generous giving.* The command was, 'None shall appear before the Lord empty.' A share of the portion of the harvest which came to each had to be offered to God, so that His direct providence in the new harvest might be acknowledged, and that man might be saved from the shrivelling influence of the sentiment which leads a man to seek his own enrichment to the disregard of higher claims. This is a purely beneficent arrangement as regards man's own nature. Gifts from man to God can be no enrichment to Him, for He is the Creator and Lord of all things. But the law of offering to God a proportion of his possessions saves a man from being self-centred and self-interested. It gives him a wider outlook and tenderer sympathies, it brings him into harmony with Divine purposes and noble ends. But there was to be not only a free and generous gift upon the Divine altar, but likewise a liberal hospitality towards the needy, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan. The Levites, having no possessions of their own, were also thrown on the brotherly consideration of the people. This provision was a helpful one on both sides. It drew into the festival celebration many who would have been left in solitude and sorrow; it encouraged a spirit of humanity in the rich, which enriched them even more than it enriched the recipients of a blessed hospitality.

¶ I cannot be a healthy Christian, I cannot be a happy Christian, I cannot be a Christlike Christian, *without giving,* any more than I can be such *without praying.* My soul must suffer—I must sustain spiritual loss and damage. . . . Surely, if we are at all adequately alive to the blessedness of giving,—the greater blessedness, to use the Lord's own words, of giving than of receiving; if we saw it in the light of privilege even more than of duty; if we at all realized that we were giving to God,—giving to Him His own,—giving Him what He has given to us,—giving to Him who gave His Son for us,—giving to Him who gave Himself for us,—we should be far from grumbling and grudging, as many do, and as we have often done; we should welcome each new opportunity of helping on the cause of God or of doing good to others; feeling in each case that we ourselves have benefited most of all. Many think our religion costly,—that it is all sacrifice. If it were not costly, it would not be the religion of Christ. But it is worth it all. It has its returns, large and overflowing, in joys and blessings which strangers cannot understand.[1]

¶ In the biography of Joseph Fels, the American millionaire, we have this testimony from his friend Mr. George Lansbury:

'When I first went to the home his wife and he had made at Bickley, in Kent, it seemed like a new world; a world from which all the cheap and nasty things of life had been banished, where the outstanding thought of each was how to serve God by serving man. Before my wife and I met him we had seldom visited the homes of very rich persons, but a visit to "Elmwood" was to us just like going home. This experience was not ours only, it was that of all who visited them. How could it be otherwise? The first thing the visitor saw when crossing the threshold was the words on the panel of the door:—

What I spent I had!
What I saved I lost!
What I gave I have!

Both Joseph and Mary Fels did their best to live up to this creed. Business and money making must have compelled much of his attention, but it never entered into his conversation round their table, or by their fireside. Usually we just talked of how the lot of the toiling masses might be brightened and bettered. Our talks ranged from Single Tax and Anarchy, to Landlordism and Bureaucracy. To listen to him was like listening to one who had seen a great light, to one for whom the small and mean things of life had no meaning. The freeing of land did not mean simply more potatoes or more strawberries, to him it represented the means by which the whole human race could be made free. Consequently it was for him a great inspiration to enable him to spend himself, as well as his money, ungrudgingly.'[2]

[1] *The Life of James Hood Wilson, D.D.,* 272.
[2] *Joseph Fels,* 33.

3. It was a time for *reviving a knowledge of God's law and a religious spirit* in the minds of the people. In the early days of the nation it was difficult to keep alive a thorough knowledge of the Divine law. There were few written copies of the law; there were no synagogues where the law could be regularly read and expounded, such as was the case after the return from Captivity, when Ezra instituted the order of the preacher and established synagogues throughout the land. To compensate for the lack of such opportunities it was commanded that this great festival should be made an occasion for reviving a knowledge of the Divine law in the nation, and of engaging in solemn religious services. The tendency in the people to relapse into idolatry and wickedness was thus counteracted in a healthy and efficient way. There is nothing which preserves and strengthens a nation in virtue and righteousness so much as a knowledge of the Word of God. It was a true religious instinct which led Ezra, when laying afresh the foundations of the nation after the return from Babylon, to assemble the tribes in the restored capital, and daily to read and expound the Divine law, until once more it had become impressed on their hearts. So there was a Divine philosophy in the arrangement that on this extended festival great gatherings for Divine worship should be held, and the law proclaimed in the hearing of all.

¶ There is a power in public worship, in the utterance of common sorrows, needs, and hopes, in the prayer that is breathed and the praise that is sung in concert, not with the crowd that fills the sanctuary, but with the innumerable company of all lands and ages who have drunk of the same spring and gone strengthened on their way, which they strangely miss who teach that worship is a worn-out superstition, and that only in the clear light of law can men walk and be blest. While man sins and suffers, while there is blood-tinged sweat upon his brow, while there is weeping in his home and anguish in his heart, that voice can never lose its music which brings forth the comfort and inspiration of the Gospel—which tells the sin-tormented spirit the tale of the Infinite Pity, and bids it lay its sobbing wretchedness to rest on the bosom of the Infinite Love.[1]

## Justice.

Deut. xvi. 20.—'Justice, justice' (RVm.).

THE repetition here—*Justice, justice!*—almost suggests a momentary wave of emotion breaking over the lawgiver's soul. Men of law are not usually given to emotion; they do not dip their pens in flame; if they allowed passion to sway them they could not do their work with the rigid, undeviating exactness which it requires. So, for the most part, the lawgivers of the Old Testament leave emotion to the prophets; they themselves go about their cold work in their cold way. Here, however, it looks as though, even in a mere passage of rule and regulation, the writer's pen trembled for a moment in his hand under the pressure of an ideal passionately desired. 'Justice, justice,' he writes, as if heart and pen were for the moment enthralled by the word that was more than a mere commandment—a vision descending out of heaven from God, a deep and tremendous necessity for man if he would make his life in this world safe and prosperous.

Here we touch one of the most fundamental instincts of our human nature. It is often visible in the life of a child, in his sense of fair-play, in the tearful perplexity occasioned by some small injustice in home or school, the passionate resentment when a youthful martyr has been unjustly punished. And it emerged with great vividness also in the thought of humanity, in days when the world was a good deal nearer to its childhood than it now is. When the thought of Greece was at its best, the idea of justice and the idea of God were almost interchangeable. Justice was the daughter of Zeus. Æschylus was the poet of justice—of a power from whose pursuit, whether for reward or for punishment, no human soul could escape. 'Justice hath not suffered him to live' was the thought of the Maltese barbarians regarding Paul, put into words by a Hellenic mind. And in the Old

[1] J. Gregory, *Phillips Brooks*, 18.

Testament the same thought is central: the momentary passion of this lawgiver's reference is but the electric spark which tells of a powerful current: the ideal of justice gripped the Hebrew conscience with a force which can still be felt.

Principal Harper, writing of these very Deuteronomic codes, admirably summarizes the Hebrew conception as comprising three elements—first, that justice should be cheap; second, that it should be accessible; and third, that it should be impartial—the phrase in v. 19, 'Thou shalt not respect persons, nor take a gift,' is characteristic. No doubt the doctrine of impartiality took grim forms. But even the *lex talionis* was meant to be impartial; it could be invoked by the poor against the rich as much as by the rich against the poor. It was the doctrine of human brotherhood in a sour and unripe stage of development. It was the idea of equality encased in a hard shell. And because the men who proclaimed this doctrine of justice were so sure that the Power reigning in the highest was a power making for righteousness, they were not ashamed to claim Divine sanction for it and to utter it with a 'Thus saith the Lord.' Justice was to them more than the secret of a stable society; it was the will and commandment of the Almighty.

1. There is a theological message here—something that bears witness to God. We need it all the more because our minds work in the opposite direction to those of Jewish lawgivers and prophets. They believed in God, in a God with a character, and therefore they believed in justice as the expression of His will. There are many among us who, if they move upon a theological track at all, must move the other way; and here is a thought by which, perhaps, they may be helped to climb to Him. Here is a holy and accepted message—a message so accepted that it moves armies and fleets and calls men from their homes and their dearest possessions. Whence did this idea come? Must not this flame in human hearts have been lit at a fire greater than itself? If the souls of men have a sense of justice, then must we not accept Carlyle's doctrine that 'the great soul of the world is just.' No 'blind force' theory of the universe is adequate to account for the sense of justice in human hearts, any more than it is adequate to account for the instinct of pity and love. Flame comes from flame. Writing can come only from a hand that writes. And if this word 'justice' is written times without number upon the page of history, we may take it as the signature of Him whose name is Holy.

2. There is also a social message here, for it is only on this basis that the social fabric within our own borders can be secure. This was beginning to be apparent even before the war began. People were getting tired of charity. They were, indeed, beginning to be afraid of charity. They had come to realize that mere charity, as a remedy for human sorrow and need, had been rather a ghastly failure. They were wondering whether it was not time to try a little justice in its place. Large gifts to church or charity from those who did not treat their own employees fairly were beginning to look specially odious. And there was a deep and widespread feeling among social workers of all types that the whole system we had allowed to grow up was tremendously and tragically unfair.

When Jeremy Taylor wrote of Christian justice in *Holy Living*, it was characteristic of his age and standpoint that he should treat first of 'Obedience to our Superiors.' When we think of social justice to-day, we most readily turn to the other side of the matter—the duties of those who are in possession to those who are more or less disinherited. But the complete ideal includes both sides: it includes the loyalty of conscience to the smallest and humblest task; it includes also a scrupulous care on the part of those who hold the greater posts and privileges that those whose lives they control shall not be robbed of anything essential to a complete and healthy existence. Here is indeed a two-edged sword, which requires careful handling. 'For although the poor must fare no worse for his poverty, yet in justice he must fare no better for it; and although the rich must be no more regarded, yet he must not be less. And to

this purpose the tutor of Cyrus instructed him, when, in a controversy where a great boy would have taken a large coat from a little boy because his own was too little for him and the other's was too big, he adjudged the great coat to the great boy; his tutor answered, "Sir, if you were made a judge of decency or fitness, you had judged well in giving the biggest to the biggest; but when you are appointed judge, not whom the coat did fit but whose it was, you should have considered the title and the possession, who did the violence, and who made it, or who bought it." And so it must be in judgments between the rich and the poor: it is not to be considered what the poor man needs, but what is his own.'

3. The same light shines upon the future. The same instinct of justice that so unsparingly condemns the present makes a better and fairer future inexorably necessary, if this universe is to be counted in any sense rational. Men's thoughts worked along that line long ago. It was one thing for prophets and lawgivers to preach justice; it was another for kings and common men to put those teachings into practice. And injustice built in Israel, as elsewhere, a dark and terrible kingdom. Kings were unjust to their people. People were unjust to one another. Commercialism had its slaves and victims, when the poor were sold for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes. And worst of all, the warrior empires of the world—ambitious, grasping, conscienceless—trod down the smaller peoples into bondage and death. So the instinct for justice, deprived of its rights in the present, turned to the future as to its kingdom. The day of justice was not yet: it was coming: it must come. This promised Day of the Lord was to be a day of stable equilibrium for human society, a day of just judgment upon the evildoer and of just recompense to the man who feared God, a day when the wounds of the world should be closed by the Sun of Righteousness arisen with healing in His wings.

The logic of that ancient hope still holds. The more loudly the cry for justice calls from the human heart, the more it seems to call in vain to 'the god of things-as-they-are,' who is very like 'the god of this world.' The greater the need, therefore, to guide this expectation towards the God of things-as-they-are-to-be, who is very like the God of the prophets and of the Christ. In short, the greater the need of an Advent hope. Men's thoughts of the final judgment, so far as they believe in it at all, have been slowly changing. A century ago the supreme question relating to that day was—How shall man justify himself before God? Souls of our own day, believing and reverent, often show unconsciously but plainly that for them the centre of interest in eschatology has shifted: it is now the question—How shall God justify Himself before men? how shall He show that all along His administration of His universe has been wise and righteous? It is the preacher's task to show that here also, as in its social aspects, justice is a two-sided thing, and that if we are deeply right in expecting the Judge of all to satisfy our instinct for justice, this very demand on our part may recoil upon ourselves in condemnation if we have failed in righteous dealing towards God and man. If we emphasize the latter side, it is a warning to which the deepest things in nature and life give weight: it makes us tremble in our hope, and turn again from God's righteousness to the gospel of His mercy. But if we preach the former side, as we must sometimes do, it gives us an Advent conception real, ethical, and permanent, so that we can rejoice in our trembling and lift up our heads to look for new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell. Rousseau wrote once in bitter sarcasm to a wealthy and powerful man who had wronged him, 'You belong to a class which relieves you from the necessity of being just,' and human nature on many a flimsy pretext escapes too often from that necessity. Therefore, when all is done that can be done along the line of effort and education, we look higher than human nature to bring in the desired consummation. God's day is coming. He Himself is coming, the Just and the Merciful. The souls that realize the meaning of this hope take from it for themselves and for humanity a humble confidence:

Fear not; He made thee dust:
Cling to that sweet word 'Just';
All's well with thee if thou art in Just Hands.

They also learn a grave responsibility, as the Master said—not to beat their fellow-servants, not to eat and drink with the drunken, but to have lamps lit and loins girt and to be themselves like men who wait for their Lord.[1]

## The Irrevocable Past.

(NEW YEAR)

Deut. xvii. 16.—'Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.'

1. To some of us there may be relief and even comfort in this assurance. The experiences through which we have come may have been such that we cannot wish for their renewal. The path over which we have passed may have been so rough, and steep, and dangerous that we cannot contemplate traversing it again without a shudder. Take any one of the terrible catastrophes which occurred during the past year, and ask those who came out of them unscathed whether, with the assurance of similar preservation, they would relish a repetition of their experience, and they will answer, with a solemn intenseness, 'No! not for worlds!' These memories give an almost passionate vehemence to their gratitude as they cry: 'Thank God that is all over!' For them, therefore, there is comfort in the thought that they 'shall henceforth return no more that way.'

Some, too, may have had such a time of anxiety that they are glad to think that it is now behind them and not to be renewed. If they had known of it before they entered on it they would have shrunk from it, and now that they have had actual trial of it they say that they could not do it over again. They are grateful to God that they did not break down under the strain, but they have had enough of it. There are not a few, also, whose past months have been so filled with afflictions that they do not hanker after a repetition of them. They have hardly ever been out of the sick room; or they have been compelled to look day by day on the gradual decay of dear ones whom they have had ultimately to follow to the grave; or the pressure of worldly anxiety has been so heavy upon them that the rolling back of the year and the renewal of its trials would be to them a thing to be deprecated rather than desired. And some there are who have had such a fierce fight with temptation, and have come out of it, victorious indeed, yet with such exhaustion that they cannot but rejoice in the thought that now it is all behind them in 'the irrevocable past.' They are glad for the result, but they would not willingly re-enter the agony of the conflict. So this text, taken as an assurance that we cannot re-live our lives, has in it an element of comfort. It is a relief to know that some things are over and done with. It is an unspeakable satisfaction to think that, whatever new trials may be in store for us, those in the past have been borne, and are not to be borne again.

¶ And, though I think, no man can live well once, but he that could live twice, yet, for my own part, I would not live over my hours past, or begin again the thread of my days; not upon Cicero's ground, because I have lived them well, but for fear I should live them worse. I find my growing judgment daily instruct me how to be better, but my untamed affections and confirmed vitiosity make me daily do worse. I find in my confirmed age the same sins I discovered in my youth; I committed them because I was a child; and, because I commit them still, I am yet an infant.[1]

2. But there is another side to the subject, and that is full of solemnity, not unattended with sorrow. For in the past there are many things which we now wish had been otherwise. Our afterthought has shown us much to which our forethought was blind; but we cannot alter anything now. All is done; and nothing behind us can be undone. The past is always seen more correctly after it has become the past than it was when it was present; and so, as we take a review of the year now nearing its close, we perceive more clearly where we have

[1] J. M. E. Ross.

[1] Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, 386.

failed, or in what we have been to blame, than we did at the time when we were in the thick of things. We mark positive sins where at the moment we saw only shrewdnesses or matters of prudence. We can tell now where we missed opportunities of doing good which we scarcely observed as we came to them. We have to mourn the fact that many of our most sacredly formed resolutions have been sadly broken. If only we could put these things right now! If only we could take back with us the experience which we have since acquired, and begin again, say at the commencement of last year—how different would its record be! But that cannot be. We shall 'return no more that way.' What is done is done. Lost opportunities cannot be recalled. No cement of human device can mend a broken vow. The past remains fixed, unalterable—not to be washed out by tears, not to be amended by repentance.

What then? What is to be done with it? If we cannot cancel it, we can confess the evil that is in it, and seek through Jesus Christ forgiveness for that. We can obtain through the great atonement acceptance with God notwithstanding our sins. We never can get rid of the fact that they have been committed; but we may be cleansed of the guilt of committing them. The sting of our guilt may be extracted, and the past may cease to be a clog upon our spiritual progress. By faith in Jesus we may be enabled in a very true sense even to forget our sins; and, taking the good out of our experience, we may make the future so full of the service of our generation that God may seem almost to 'restore to us the years that the locust hath eaten.'

¶ Man hugs his sins sorrowfully, but God burns them in the fires of oblivion: every dawn is a new token of forgiveness.[1]

3. And then, turning the thought which the words of the text express, we may make use of it for the future. We are about to enter upon a path in which there will be no possibility of retracing our steps; let us be very careful, therefore, where we plant our feet. We have only once to live; therefore let us live to purpose. The day that dawned this morning will never dawn again. The opportunities which it brought with it will never come again; and if we fail to fill it with the service it requires of us there will be no possibility of returning into it to repair the mischief. The year on which we are about to enter will come only once; if, therefore, we trifle away any of its hours, or abuse any of its days, or miss any of its opportunities, the evil is irreparable. So let us seize every moment as it comes, and use it as we shall wish we had done when we look back upon it from eternity. Remember, the year does not come to you all at once, in twelve months at a time, nor even in twelve distinct instalments of a month each; no, nor yet in three hundred and sixty-five separate portions of a day apiece: but in individual moments. Do not, therefore, lose the moments in thinking that you will secure the year; but consider that the year is to be redeemed by the consecration of each moment to Jesus. Fill every day with His service. Meet every duty that confronts you as a duty to be performed for Him. Face every trial that comes to you as a trial to be endured for Him. Bear every affliction that falls upon you as an affliction to be suffered for His sake. Think not that by and by you will turn to Him, and that will secure life as a whole for Him. Let every moment be His, and that will be giving Him the life.

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds
them all.
I, in my pleachèd garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.[1]

4. But there is no enforcement of this truth to be compared with that which comes from the example of our Lord Himself. These are His

[1] E. G. Cheyne, *The Man with the Mirror*, 125.

[1] Emerson.

words: 'I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work'; and so constantly did He act out that resolution that when the time of His crucifixion arrived He could say not only, 'Father, the hour is come,' but also, 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' For every hour He had His appropriate work, and so the life and the work were finished together. And when you ask how that was accomplished you may find the open secret in His saying to His followers: 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.' On that He lived, and therefore for that He lived. His first recorded words were these: 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' and to that He kept Himself until the last. More than food, more than rest, better than life itself to Him, was the doing of that will. And when we fully imbibe His spirit our lives will come to be, like His, rounded into finished completeness and filled with blessing and beneficence to our fellowmen. For everything God gives us to do there is a day when it can be done, and a night when the doing of it is no longer possible: so let us seize the opportunity and do everything in its own day.

But once I pass this way,
And then—no more.
But once—and then, the Silent Door
Swings on its hinges,—
Opens . . . . closes,—
And no more
I pass this way.
So while I may,
With all my might,
I will essay
Sweet comfort and delight,
To all I meet upon the Pilgrim Way.
For no man travels twice
The Great Highway,
That climbs through Darkness up to Light—
Through Night
To Day.[1]

[1] John Oxenham.

## Moses and Christ.

Deut. xviii. 15.—'A Prophet . . . like unto me.'

THESE words, which have come down to us as one of the last utterances of Moses, did more than almost any others to create and keep alive that expectation of some great prophet to come—sometimes identified with Messiah, sometimes distinguished from Him—which existed among the Jews generally at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry. The words were familiar to every Jew from his childhood, and through all the changes and vicissitudes of his national history, through those long years when vision and prophecy alike had ceased, they stood as the great promise of God, of the ultimate fulfilment of which no Jew who believed in the faithfulness of His God could have a shadow of doubt.

Let us consider some of the ways in which Christ was like unto Moses.

1. They were alike *in respect of kinship*. The lawgiver of Israel was no foreigner. He might have been. Had he liked, he could have grown up a courtier and a prince in Egypt. But he would not break the bonds which God Himself had bound. The Hebrews were despised and downtrodden; but they and he were of one family, and he had rather be allied with them than have all the honours their oppressors could heap on him. In his wonderful book about Arabia, Charles Doughty tells how, at Hâyil, in the midst of the desert sands, he saw the caravan of pilgrims, the Haj, pass through on its way from Bagdad to the sacred city of Mecca. And, as it moved forward, one of the pilgrims, dressed like his neighbours in Oriental fashion, halted to talk with him. He spoke in French. 'I am an Italian,' he confessed, 'a Piedmontese of Turin.' He had given up the Bible for the Koran, and had become a Moslem. 'When I said it amazed me that one born under the Christian name should waive this privilege to be the brother of Asiatic barbarians in a foolish religion, he answered with Italian urbanity that a man may not always choose, but must sometimes go with the world, and that, when

he returned to his native country, he intended to wipe off all the rust of his Mohammedan life.' A man may not always choose, pleaded Francesco Ferrari; but a brave man always can. Moses chose, and preferred affliction with God's people to the pleasures of sin.

And Christ chose. He took hold of the seed of Abraham. He who made you and me consented, hastened, rejoiced, to bind himself by our limitations and to live in our creaturely world. He was, and is, One of ourselves, *of thy brethren,* as it was said; and the saying is the simple truth. Lord Macaulay writes of William the Third: 'He saved England, but he never obtained her love. To him she was always a land of exile, visited with reluctance and quitted with delight.' Such sentences are totally inapplicable to the Apostle and Prophet of our confession. He saved us because He loved us, and our misery drew Him out and down from His native heaven. He did not visit us with reluctance; it was His joy to empty Himself for our sakes and to take the form of a bondservant. He did not quit us with delight; He has never quitted us at all; He wears our nature in the splendours of His exaltation, and understands our infirmities, and is able and willing to succour us. Our next-of-kin are not so near to us as Christ is; He can establish a fellowship with our souls which is impossible to them. Let us do justice to His friendliness, as the children did when they caught at His clothes. Let us hear Him gladly, as the common people did who were not baffled by His words. Let us receive His largess, as the sinners did who despaired of themselves but found in Him all they wanted.

2. They were alike *in the power of emancipation.* The annals of the past have frequent stories to relate of liberations, individual, national, religious; but few among them are so surprising and so moving as the enfranchisement which Moses prompted and led. He was armed with unearthly powers to break the despotism of the tyrant, to unlock his inexorable doors that the serfs might pass out free, and to conduct the liberated nation through many dangers and delays to the borders of the good land which God had promised. But even this exodus, majestic and miraculous as it was, dwindles before the deliverance we owe to our Lord. We were slaves in a spiritual Egypt, a country of strangers. Old recollections and broken traditions of a former home and a higher estate clung to us; just as round their hearths Pharaoh's abject vassals talked of an ancestral Canaan, and of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who had walked with God and who still lived in Him. But our sin had lost us our dowry and demesne, and we were in the sorest plight. Then One sent from God, and invested with the righteousness and strength of God, shattered the gates of brass and bars of iron, leading us out of the prison of our guilt and fear, our bondage and hopelessness. It was an Emancipation Day without a parallel; and it was not the end, but rather the beginning. Christ intends His initial freedom to be succeeded and supplemented by an experience which habitually walks at liberty; which dwells in a large room; and which, through the steadfastness of His grace and the simplicity of our faith, journeys from power to power and from enablement to enablement.

¶ Mr. Stephen Paget, lecturing to young doctors, reminds them of the priceless material on which they practise their science and skill. 'Medicine,' he says, 'works in lives. That is why Medicine is not a fine art. It is not the art, but the stuff, which is so fine. The doctor must interfere with that one substance which is above all else in nature—the one texture, man, infinitely complex, infinitely precious. We touch Heaven, when we lay our hands on the human body.' Ah, and more nearly still, more critically still, we touch Heaven when we lay our hands on the human soul: God forgive some of us that we go about the delicate and awful task so blunderingly and so rudely! But Christ's medicine is the rarest, and they are overcoming potentialities which stream from Him, and He touches nothing which He does not cure. Moses was only the suggestion in miniature of our New Testament Prophet, who is like him indeed, but who is vaster, more undecaying, and more invincible.[1]

[1] A. Smellie.

3. They were alike *as regards intimacy with God.* A singular nearness of communion was granted to the leader of the chosen people. God talked with him face to face, and not in dark speeches. When He called Samuel, Samuel did not immediately recognize whose were the accents that roused him from his sleep. When Isaiah beheld Him His throne was high and lifted up, not close at hand but far in the spiritual city. But the door was opened for Moses into the innermost chamber; and between God and him the understanding was more complete, the concord more perfect. Yet there were limits in his case also, depths he did not penetrate and secrets which remained hidden. The more he learned of One who loved him so well and trusted him so utterly, the more he recognized how fragmentary and partial was everything he had learned.

It is different with Christ. He saw, and sees, the countenance of God, absolutely, uninterruptedly. He thinks the Father's thoughts, and is identified with the Father in purpose and action. He is the living Word of the infinite Lord. What the One knows, the Other knows. What the One wills, the Other wills. And when we remember that this Christ, who is God's Intimate, is our Prophet, we should feel that possibilities of wisdom, of holiness, and of victory, which are literally endless, are within our reach. God's Confidant has many things to say to us. God's Equal and Well-Beloved has many gifts to lavish on our needy hearts. Three things, Luther counselled, we should study well—'*quis, qualis, et quantus* Christ is.' Who He is, and of what nature, and how surpassingly great—to master this knowledge, and there to let our consideration stay and cling, is to have the answer to each of our problems, the healing for each of our diseases, the ending of each of our poverties and pains. For your necessity and mine Jesus Christ has the worth of the infinite God.

4. They were alike *in the sacrifice of intercession.* When Israel sinned, and God would have cut the nation off from the inheritance, it was Moses who interposed. Tender, strong, and almost unimaginably selfless was his pleading—something which, in the intensity of its love, went far beyond our meagre and easy petitions for others. If only the transgressors were forgiven, he was prepared to forgo his own fields and vineyards in the good land—prepared to consent even that his own name should be blotted from the Book of Life. To such advocacy and such an advocate God could not say No; and He gave Moses the boons which he craved.

John Keble has a couplet about Christ—

> Thou art our Moses out of sight;
> Speak for us or we perish quite.

But the Second Moses, like the Second Adam, surpasses inestimably the first. In His person; for He is not a servant but a Son. In His character; for He has no sin of His own for which to supplicate pardon. In His argument and plea; for He presents His sufficient sacrifice, overflowing merit, and redeeming death as the reasons—unanswerable, decisive—why God should be merciful and gracious to us for whom His blood was shed. 'Speak for us,' Keble wrote; but it is incredible that Christ should have to speak; speaking would imply a certain distance between the Father and Him, and there is no distance. 'Theirs is a unity,' says Professor Hugh Mackintosh, 'that needs no language.' It is enough that He should appear on our behalf. That wins all that we require, and more than all. His appearance is an unceasing memorial of the reconciliation He accomplished for us on earth. It is a living and eloquent delineation of the wants and dangers of men tossed and tempted as once He Himself was. He never forgets us. He is in perpetual sympathy with us, and is always projecting His sympathy into His communion with the Father. Since we have such an Advocate in the courts of heaven, since Christ makes continual intercession, shall we not live, day in day out, in a peaceable habitation, a sure dwelling, and a quiet resting-place? Fearless and unafraid the good soldier of righteousness ought to be, for his name is graven on His captain's heart. Strong and of good courage the lowliest Christian will be, when he realizes that time and dignity have not lessened the

eare, the companionship, and the succour of His Friend of friends.

Not as one blind and deaf to our beseeching,
Neither forgetful that we are but dust,
Not as from heavens too high for our upreaching,
Coldly sublime, intolerably just:—

Nay but thou knewest us, Lord Christ thou knowest,
Well thou rememberest our feeble frame,
Thou canst conceive our highest and our lowest,
Pulses of nobleness and aches of shame.

Therefore have pity!—not that we accuse thee,
Curse thee and die and charge thee with our woe:
Not thro' thy fault, O Holy One, we lose thee,
Nay, but our own,—yet hast thou made us so!

Then tho' our foul and limitless transgression
Grows with our growing, with our breath began,
Raise thou the arms of endless intercession,
Jesus, divinest when thou most art man![1]

## The Fruit Trees.

Deut. xx. 19.—'Thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof.'

The command was not to destroy the fruit trees. One can easily see the danger of it in this ancient warfare. In the keen excitement of the conflict any tree which might prove useful would be cut down. But for a command like this, the Israelites might blaze away indiscriminately. If they needed a bridge over a stream, a ladder to scale a wall, or a battering ram to batter one down, any tree which presented itself might be used. In an emergency there was little time for thought, and any timber that came to hand might serve. The fruit trees might be cut down thoughtlessly; the matter of the moment might absorb attention to forgetfulness of the future. The thing that mattered was to capture the city, and anything that would aid in such capture was apt to be seized and pressed into service.

The idea here is that the victory would be robbed of its full reward if in gaining it the fruit trees were cut down. The fruit trees would be needed after the city was taken. The future was not to be sacrificed to the present. Whoever occupied the city after it was taken would need food, which in part the fruit trees would supply; therefore there was to be no reckless destruction of the food supply of the future. Capture the city by all means, but remember the city is of little use without the fruit trees.

The fruit trees of modern life are the moralities and spiritualities, the noblest, highest things life has for us. They are the things that abide and satisfy when the more fleeting things take to themselves wings and fly away. Human life in many of its aspects is a struggle, a conflict, a form of warfare. There is rivalry, competition, opposition. In such a war a man is often tempted to trample upon moral obligations, to pay little heed to spiritual impulses, to disregard the higher desires of his nature. He is only too apt to yield to selfish purposes and count as of little consequence unselfish ones. He is ambitious, and in seeking to fulfil his ambition certain methods may be pursued which take the edge off his conscience and the fine bloom off his spirit. Throughout the whole Book of Deuteronomy we are asked, in our relations with one another, to remember that there is something bigger and ultimately of more value to the world than any personal right or ambition of our own.

1. Sometimes in these days of severe pressure and competition, it is a matter of a small business dishonesty. Perhaps it is a matter of illicit commissions, or unfair bargaining, or mean dealing. Often the Government is considered 'fair game' and the Income-tax return is 'cooked.' Or it is a railway company that is defrauded. Many people practise such deceptions who in their private business lives are perfectly honest. But, after all, it means the cutting-down of the fruit trees; it means the

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

dwarfing of the life and the enfeeblement of the character. Something is inevitably lost in the process, and the city is not what it might be to us when we gain it. Our influence is shorn of something of its power for good.

2. The saying has its application to other phases of life. Some men join the Church for other than the highest reasons. There are certain social connections a man would like to enjoy, or a business connection he would like to cultivate. What possibility is there for that man entering into the real life of the Church? Probably he has his reward, but the Church has been reduced to a club for him. So men seek to deal with high and holy things from an unworthy motive, for an unholy and selfish purpose, like Balaam, who wished to enrich himself, and little cared at whose expense. Or like Ananias and Sapphira, who wanted to stand well with the community of the Church and have a name for generosity. Simon Magus sees a certain commercial value in the Holy Spirit and is willing to pay a price. All this making merchandise of the things of God means the cutting down of the fruit trees and the impoverishment of the city of the soul, in whatever form it may be practised.

3. God has meant certain things for certain uses, and it is the height of folly to forget this and pervert them to some other use. Fruit trees are not to be turned into battering rams. The Divine intent and purpose should be regarded. Paul said, 'For me to live is Christ,' and it would be well that we should form some such sentence and say, 'For me to live'—is what? Is it business, or pleasure, or fame, or position, or authority? If it is any one of these things, if our lives can be translated in any one or any combination of these terms we are making a grand mistake. Was it not Burne-Jones who said that his creed was: Make the best of yourself for God and humanity? No man will cut down his fruit trees if he will make this the passion of his life; and in the end he will have a city worth the having, even 'a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' Let our lives be mastered by some such ambition, and they will yield fruit unto God and humanity, and we shall know a joy and peace and love which pass understanding.

¶ It is related that someone asked Quintin Hogg, the founder of the Polytechnic Institute in London, who had devoted a large fortune to the enterprise, how much it cost to build up such an institution. 'Not very much,' was Mr. Hogg's reply, 'simply one man's life-blood.' That man got into his city, and it was a city worth getting into, and he kept his fruit trees as well. Is there no great and noble cause which is calling for our life-blood? To throw ourselves into it heart and soul will bring us to a grand city and will preserve our fruit trees.

## The Little Things.

Deut. xxii. 6.—'If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young.'

'This,' said the Rabbis, 'is the least among the commandments of Moses.' Is it? True, the commandment is only about a bird's nest; and nests are not as big as Churches. Nevertheless, a commandment about a very little thing may be a very large commandment. And at least one part of this commandment is very large, namely, the reward attached to it. The precept runs into a promise. The precept is only about a bird's nest; but the promise is that he who obeys it shall have many days and happy days. 'If a bird's nest be before thee, thou shalt not take the mother-bird with the young or the eggs, *that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.*' Now, think of that! If you take your bird's nest in the right way, you will have a long life and a prosperous one! Why, this is more than is promised to those who honour their father and mother! Their days are to be long in the land, but their promise says nothing about prosperity; whereas those who take heed to their ways when they are looking for bird's nests are promised, not long life only, but that it shall be well with them as long as they live. The two greatest blessings the Jews knew, long life and prosperity, are to be

granted to those who keep this commandment. And that can hardly be 'the least among the commandments' which carries with it so large a blessing.

1. *It sets a limit to the natural greed of men.* What would be the first impulse of a Jew who found the nest of a quail, or a partridge, with the mother-bird sitting on the young ones or the eggs? His first impulse would be to take all he could get, the old bird as well as the eggs or the young. But to do that might be very poor thrift, and very poor morality. For in destroying the parent-bird with the young, the man might be helping to destroy a whole breed of valuable birds. He would get a dinner for to-day, but he would be lessening his chance of finding one to-morrow. He would be helping himself, but he might also be injuring his neighbour. All the game birds would soon die out of England if they were not preserved, or if no close time were allowed them. And even that would not be so great a calamity to us as it would have been to the Jews, who, much more than we do, depended on hunting and fowling for their food. Hence the law of God stepped in, and said: 'Stop; think: take the young if you want them, but let the mother-bird go; for she may build another nest and rear another brood. Take enough for to-day; but don't forget to-morrow. Take enough for yourself; but don't forget your neighbour. He may find the nest next year, and may want it then even more than you want it now.' So that God's care for birds was also a care for men. He was teaching them forethought and charity. He was teaching them to be provident, and to be neighbourly, when He said, 'Thou shalt in any wise let the dam go'; that is, Thou shalt do at least so much as that.

2. *It brings the law of God into the little things of life.* And that is just where we most need it, and are most apt to forget it. The words that told men how to take a bird's nest taught them that there was a right and a wrong way of doing even such a little thing as that; and therefore they were very wholesome words. For what they meant was that God was always with them, that there was nothing so small but that they might do it unto Him; that even when they went out to walk, or to hunt, or to catch birds in the pastures and on the hills, they did not leave God behind them, or their duty to Him; that God's pure and kindly will compassed them about on every side, and that they might show their reverence for His will even in handling a bird's nest.

¶ Nothing high nor low was unworthy of these men [St. Columba and his followers], for it was all done for Christ, and in His service nothing could be mean. The sign of the Cross was put upon everything—'Holiness to the Lord' upon the bells of the horses.

Columba had been taught to have Christ *prepossest* in everything he did, and the same great lesson he sought to impress upon his disciples. Thus the 'sign of the Cross' was the consecrating of everything in connection with which the sign was made. The devil went into the very milk-pail and destroyed the milk, unless the milker so acknowledged Christ before he began his work. And for like reason the tradesmen's tools and the implements of husbandry bore the same sign manual, in token that they were to be employed only in high service.[1]

3. And this rule about bird-nesting *teaches us also that all love is sacred.* Now, think, if you were to find a nest, and a mother bird with a brood of young ones under her wings, what would it be that would give you a good chance of catching her? It would simply be her love for her nestlings. If she cared only for herself, she could fly away out of your reach. At any other time she would use her swift wings, and dart away the moment she saw you coming. But now, because she loves her young ones—her children—and cannot bear to leave them when danger is near, she sits on in her nest, or she hovers close about it and tries to strike your face with her wings. It is only because the mother-bird *is* the mother-bird, and will defend her brood at all hazards—it is only this self-forgetting love and devotion that puts her in your power. And, therefore, the law of

[1] T. H. Walker, *Saint Columba*, 69.

God steps in, and forbids you to touch her. At other times, when there is no brood in the nest, you may take her, if you can. But not now, not when it is her love for her young that moves her to run so great a risk. Love is sacred. It is base to take advantage of it. God forbids you to be so base. 'Thou shalt take the young,' if you need them; 'but thou shalt in anywise,' whatever your need, 'let the dam go.'

Love is the strongest thing in the world. And there are those who know that, and who take such base advantage of it that they sometimes ruin the character and spoil the life of those who love and trust them. There is nothing in the world so wicked, so base, so vile. If you have those who love you dearly, take heed what you do. Their love will be the comfort and joy of your life if you retain and respond to it. But that love puts them in your power. You may hurt them through it, and grieve them through it, and make them go wrong when, but for you, they would have gone right. And if you do, you will be scorned by all good men and women. If you do, what will you say to the God of all love, and what will He say to you, when you stand at last before Him?

Or worser far the pangs of keen remorse,
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt,
Of guilt perhaps where we've involved others,
The young, the innocent, who fondly loved us,
Nay more that very love their cause of ruin!
O burning hell! in all thy store of torments
There's not a keener lash! [1]

## Prevention.

Deut. xxii. 8.—'When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.'

Obviously the letter of this precept applies only to the flat-roofed houses of the East. There the house-top has always been a place of resort. Rahab took the scouts to the top of her house in Jericho, where her flax was spread out, and hid them there. King David walked on the house-top at the hour of evening. Our Lord spoke to the Twelve of preaching 'upon the house-tops.' And, among a people who used the house-tops as the Israelites did, it was a wise and considerate law which required the construction of a firm balustrade all round the roof, to prevent any one from falling over in a heedless moment.

It is not improbable that, even in our climate, the pressure of crowded cities may lead to more use being made of the house-tops than heretofore. Already the plan of having a recreation-ground for children on the flat roof of a schoolhouse has been tried, and it has been found to answer well. In any such case the need of a strong balustrade is of course as imperative as it was in Palestine. But whatever may be said of the letter of this law, there is a spirit in it which is restricted to no style of building, but should be in force in every climate and in every age. God requires that human life shall not be trifled with. Precaution should be taken that it be not, even through inadvertence, sacrificed. And this principle belongs peculiarly to our religion. Other forms of religion have breathed a cruel spirit, and a contempt for human life.

We can imagine an Israelite chafing at such a command as this. 'Religion,' he might say, 'is religion. Sacrifice is sacrifice. Prayer is prayer. But business also is business, and has its own necessities. May not a man build a house as he likes with his own money?' But he might be answered thus: 'There is no such separation as you desire between piety and conduct. Religion does not consent to be shut up in tabernacle, temple, or synagogue. It must come into the streets and highways, a witness for righteousness and love. It absolutely denies your right to build or to do anything whatever just as you like. The question is not what you choose, but what you ought, to do.'

1. The spirit of the enactment suggests other and wider applications. Religion has something serious to say to those who possess and those who manage mines and railways, and those who send ships to sea. Calamities will happen even in the most carefully excavated

[1] Burns.

and managed mines, on the most skilfully built and regulated railways, and in the stoutest and best found ships; but when they occur through parsimony, or through recklessness, the parties who are really responsible, whether or not they are made answerable to human justice, incur the heavy displeasure of God. He requires that all precautions which are possible shall be taken to prevent a wanton sacrifice of life. Precaution is not an interesting word. It has not an heroic sound: but it denotes a thing that is wise and that pleases God. A dashing rescue of men out of deadly peril attracts more admiration; but he does well who prevents them from falling into the danger. Precaution is better than retrieval. Prevention is better than cure. It is far better to put a balustrade round the flat house-top, and so keep people from falling over, than to let them fall, and then display fine surgical skill in setting their broken bones.

2. It is thus that men ungenerously disregard the moral safety of others. One has what is called a 'strong head.' Whether it be from strength or from sluggishness, he can drink wine with apparent impunity; and on this account he laughs at abstinence. Why cannot men control themselves as to the quantity they drink and take care not to go too far? But his own son may be unable to govern himself when he feels the excitement of intoxicants; or some friend, imitating his indulgence but unable to imitate his self-command, may fall into sin and misery. Though a Hebrew householder might himself be safe enough without a parapet round the roof, his children, his visitors, and his servants might not be so. And he was to think of others as well as of himself, and therefore 'make a battlement.' In like manner one of us may be able to imbibe stimulants with safety; but he is not on that account justified in so using his liberty as to put others, not so steady or self-controlled, in peril of drunkenness and disgrace. 'Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.' There is more need to say now, 'Destroy not him with thy drink, for whom Christ died!'

¶ The preventive ministries of life are not, indeed, so heroic and impressive in their aspects as ministries of a more affirmative kind, yet are they set down in the book of God as most acceptable services. If you prevent your boy from becoming a drunkard, it is better than if you were to save him from the extremest dissipation, though it will not carry with it so imposing an appearance before the eyes of society.[1]

Far better you were sleeping, O my soul,
Than that your coming forth a moment stole
From another's heart its rest.
Die you silent in my breast
And seek in death that answer life denied:
Lest a dying voice should curse instead of pray,
Lest a heart should shadow, blighted of its May,
Lest a soul glad of its light
Should be plunged in gloom of night,
Be in the World's seeing satisfied.[2]

3. The Sunday-school teacher avowedly deals with the moral and the spiritual. But he mistakes if he thinks that he is placed over a class, week by week, solely to tell children of salvation in the sense of rescue from sin that has been committed or guilt that has been incurred. Sin in them is in germ rather than in developed strength; and a wise teacher, as well as a wise parent, will aim at the prevention of that development. Those who have children under their influence should so impress and instruct them as to raise a parapet of moral protection round the youthful heart and character. There are those who in after life will, in their infatuation, leap over every such battlement. But it is none the less desirable that the battlement should be there. It will save some, though not all. It is a check, though not a panacea. It gives time for reason, for conscience, for reflection, for self-respect, above all, for the grace of God to act, and preserve men from moral self-destruction.

The discipline of slavery is unknown
Amongst us. Hence the more do we require
The discipline of virtue.

[1] Joseph Parker.
[2] Dora Sigerson Shorter.

So said Wordsworth, pleading for the education of the English people, not in letters only, but in moral and religious truth, and in the proper habits of a Christian life.

> So shall licentiousness and black resolve
> Be rooted out, and virtuous habits take
> Their place; and genuine piety descend,
> Like an inheritance, from age to age.

## The Forgotten Sheaf.

(HARVEST).

Deut. xxiv. 19.—'When thou reapest thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it.'

1. Our text takes us out into the harvest field, and the work of harvesting is nearly done. It is sunset; the waggon is piled with sheaves; the oxen are straining at the collar to get home. The men have been busy in the field since daybreak; now it is cleared. But over yonder, where the land dips a little, what is that standing golden in the sunset? Can it be that some sheaf has been forgotten? We can imagine the farmer getting angry. Always these servants—careless, careless! His first instinct is to go and fetch the sheaf, but God steps in and overrules his instinct by the revelation of a higher law. 'Do not go back,' says God. 'Is it forgotten? I have not forgotten it. Your heart is filled with the question of your granary. My soul is filled with the hunger of the poor.' And so the first impulse of the farmer's heart—the instinct of preservation, let us call it—is ruled out of court, conquered, subjugated, by the higher law of love.

2. We shall always grudge the sheaf till the poor and the fatherless and the widow are remembered. It was that new thought, compelling, masterful, that made the farmer go home without a grudge. We think only of the sheaf and are loth to lose it; we think of the starving—and—yes, Lord, let it stand! In other words, we require a new affection, new vision, new love to God and man, if we are to make these sacrifices in the field that God asks from every earnest soul. And that is why, at the very outset of things, Christ says to each of us, 'Give me thine heart.' Without surrender sacrifice is hard. It is something external, alien, intrusive. But when God calls us into the love of Jesus, and we see the fatherless and the widow and the strangers *there*, we can leave the sheaf in the field without a murmur, and go homeward and restward singing with the team.

3. And thus the harvest field, no less than the Church, is seen to be God's. In spite of all the ampler teaching of Jesus Christ, that is one harvest lesson we still need to learn. We are so ready to break up our life into fragments, and to give God control over only a few. When thou worshippest—yes, God shall have His place there. And when thou prayest—yes; perhaps even when thou sufferest. But when thou cuttest down thy harvest, what then? It is not so easy *there* to be obedient. Yet that is true religion—the only religion with any power in it, the only religion that saves us from hypocrisy—to make God coextensive with life; to interpenetrate all with Christ. The sunshine streams through the window of the factory no less than through the window of the church! O Light of God! lighten us everywhere.

¶ To be a religious man in earnest means that the regulative centre of life is not self-interest, but fellowship with the Highest and a sense of responsibility to Him. That is one of the inner meanings of prayer. A fine English Christian has said that his prayer more and more reduces itself to two words—'Now, Lord.' He means that in the pressure of the day's work he can make swift reference to the supreme court of his life.

That kind of experience is too familiar to be called unreal. A young man falls in love with a high-minded girl; marries her; the children come; the home becomes the centre of his life. He does not think of it all the time, but it is always there. Nothing in his life escapes its influence; it permeates his plans; it is the nucleus of his ambitions and hopes; and, as for his character, it is the strongest protection that he has, so powerful and controlling are the influences that flow from it against all that is shameful and unclean. So central and con-

trolling also is a genuine, first-rate, religious fellowship with God—what a sextant is to the sailor, the keynote to the singer, the colour tone to the painter, sun time to our uncertain watches.[1]

4. One other thought the forgotten sheaf suggests—the apparent wastefulness of love. If Mr. Worldly Wiseman had been there, standing and criticising over the hedge, he would have gone home quite angry at what he would call this farmer's wastefulness. 'To think of him leaving a sheaf out in his field; and in these hard times too, when farmers are always grumbling. And there could be no question that he saw it. I actually saw him turn round and look at it.' So to that worldly wisdom by the hedge it looked an extravagant, prodigal, wasteful kind of thing. But it was not that in the eyes of God. It was only the apparent wastefulness of love. It was the uncalculating way of love.

And it was that way of love that saved us. It was that very way that Jesus trod when He went straight to Calvary and the grave. Love never asks how little can I do; it always asks how much. Love never stops to haggle and to bargain; it gives itself—all, passionately, utterly. Men call it waste; perhaps so it is. But it was just what Jesus did for us. Less might have saved us; less might have saved the world. One drop of the infinitely precious blood had done it. But when we see it all poured out so royally—shed like a fountain without a thought of self—do we not feel that God is a Saviour, do we not feel that at the back of all God is love? Perhaps God was leading the world like a child to that, when He taught the lesson of the forgotten sheaf!

Love loves for ever,
And finds a sort of joy in pain,
And gives with nought to take again,
And loves too well to end in vain:
Is the gain small then?
Love laughs at 'never,'
Outlives our life, exceeds the span
Appointed to mere mortal man:
All which love is and does and can
Is all in all then.[1]

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 135.

## Trade and Truth.

Deut. xxv. 13.—'Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.'

Integrity in business is a subject well within the sphere of religious teaching, and the Bible has far more to say about it than is generally supposed. Inspired men often allude to trade as a necessary part of life's experience, and they constantly urge that in it we should seek to obey the two fundamental laws of God's Kingdom—'thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,' and 'thy neighbour as thyself.' It is tacitly assumed in Scripture that the exchange of goods is for the world's advantage, that those who carry it on are benefactors of the race, and that in it they may do the will of God on earth, as angels do it in heaven.

Now trade, like all else, has its own special temptations, and these naturally differ in form in different ages and countries. Amid sparse populations, and in primitive times, wrong-doing was more simple than it is now. In these days a dishonest trader would perhaps use a shekel weight which was a little under standard, or a cubit measure about the eighth of an inch short, and thus rob his customer. To save himself from exposure he would keep within reach a full weight or measure, in order to slip it out if a keen customer came in, or if the visit of an inspector (if they had inspectors) was threatened; and these 'divers'—or different—'weights' were declared to be 'an abomination to the Lord'—for He is a God of truth and equity.

¶ Very significant is the oft-told story of the village grocer, professedly a religious man, who asked his boy-assistant whether he had sanded the sugar, and, receiving an affirmative answer, said, 'Then you can come in to prayers.' Probably the story is apocryphal, but at least it serves to exhibit the scorn which is justly felt by honest men who make no profession of religion for those who sit in the sanctuary on the Sunday, but cheat their customers, or their

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

agents, or their employers, during the week. Religion apart from morality is a curse rather than a blessing, and it is destined to perish through its inherent rottenness. The message of the Bible on this topic may be summed up in the words of Wolsey to Cromwell (though he himself learned it too late, and through bitter experience)—

Be just, and fear not.
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's and truth's.

1. What is the ideal of trade? It is this: the trader is an expert, able to judge the quality of the goods he buys and sells, and he uses his expert knowledge for the benefit of the customer, taking in return a fair profit as the due reward of his knowledge and trouble. If, for example, you are buying clothing, or groceries, or furniture, you expect a tradesman to show and sell what you require, and are willing, or ought to be willing, to give him in exchange what will compensate him for his work and good judgment, and at the same time will pay the legitimate cost of production. That is the ideal. But, as things are, he sometimes finds it to his interest to sell that on which he gets most profit; and you find it to your interest to strive for a bargain, even though the price you pay will not afford him fair compensation, or cover the cost of production unless produced by sweated labour. And he, to guard himself against you, will either palm off inferior goods, or ask more than he expects to get. That is a fair sample, though perhaps a rough and ready one, of the mutual distrust which sometimes, though happily not always, prevails.

¶ The selfish man as merchant aims to make as much as he can out of his customers and still retain their trade against competitors. If cheap goods will bring larger profits and more frequent sales than substantial goods, cheap goods he will sell. If worthless or deleterious goods, like most patent medicines, yield the largest margin of profit, and develop a habit which it requires repeated purchasing to satisfy, those he will advertise and urge his customers to buy. The customer in every transaction is regarded, not as a man to be served to the best of the merchant's ability for a fair return, but as a profit-producer to be exploited. 'Let the buyer look out for himself, it is no business of mine to look out for him,' is the heartless motto. It is the preacher's duty to show that merchant that he is nothing more nor less than a legalized pirate preying on the necessities of his fellow-men. The preacher very likely does not know enough about merchandising to tell the merchant just how much profit he should charge when virtual monopoly gives him the chance to charge what he pleases. But if he is fit to be a preacher, he does know what the spirit and attitude of a merchant toward his customer ought to be; and he will not allow that merchant to be comfortable in his own mind, or well esteemed by others, unless the goods he sells, the prices he charges, are determined not alone by the presence or absence of effective competition, but by a genuine desire to serve the customer by giving him at a price fairly representing the value of his skill, his risk, his capital, his labour, the commodity that customer desires.[1]

2. One of the chief restraints against wrongdoing lies in a fresh realization of the fact that God takes note of the conduct of men in business. If no part of our life is hidden from Him, that which is ordinary (which constitutes the chief part of it) is not outside His purview. Our Lord teaches us that not a bird falls to the ground without the Father's knowledge. The microscope reveals the fact that the smallest creatures are perfect in shape and often radiant in beauty. And we by prayer must seek to realize that God is acquainted with all *our* ways—that just as we may get on a negative in the camera what is too small to be seen by the unaided eye, so every act in business, in the home, or in the Church is photographed on the mind of the Eternal.

If, for example, you have a chance of making money wrongfully, bethink yourself that God knows it. The temptation may be terrific, and it often is. Perhaps it does not require an actual lie, perhaps it would be yielded to without the smallest compunction by your rival, perhaps you know that if you succumb to it

[1] W. D. Hyde, *The Gospel of Good Will*, 118.

it will enable you to give your wife some needed comfort and your children a better education. Still, knowing that it is not the right thing to do, you resist; and He who saw and rewarded the heroes of old who waxed valiant in fight will not fail to reward you, perhaps in the strengthening and ennobling of your character, which will fit you for a higher service.

¶ It is one thing to sing in your Sunday afternoon meeting, 'I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus, Trusting only Thee,' but another thing under circumstances which are not always imaginary, to give an unwavering expression of your confidence.

Take an illustration. You are a small tradesman endeavouring by honest methods of business to make a livelihood, and it may be a small competency. Opposite you there is a closed shop, towards which you have looked more than once with a little nervous anxiety. One morning you see a poster announcing that the shop will be opened on Saturday next in your own way of business. The day arrives, and, as you pass the window of your new neighbour, you observe the goods are ticketed at a price that means not only underselling you, but also that, if proper wages have been paid and just payments are to be made in relation to other obligations, the business spells roguery to somebody. There comes the vision of your own declining custom, a closed business, the meeting with your creditors, poverty for your wife and children. Satan says, with his ancient craft, 'Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee.' Then is the time for faith to reveal itself and to triumph by saying, 'I believe God, and if I must fall it shall not be by sharp practice, but by honest methods.'[1]

## The Long View

Deut. xxvi. 5.—'A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt.'

The immediate significance of these words is that they are part of a form of confession and commemoration prescribed for the devout Israelite when he brought his offering at harvest. His gift being received and laid upon the altar, the worshipper was enjoined solemnly and formally to commemorate the providential dealings of God with His people and nation. And this is the liturgical opening of the commemoration: 'A Syrian ready to perish was my father.' Why the commemoration should break into the history of the ancient people precisely at this point we do not know. It is the one providential dealing of God which must have impressed the Jewish mind as most strange and perplexing. The Syrian ready to perish was, of course, Jacob in the penury of Canaan. The harvest had failed, the famine was sore, and presently, under the direct intimation of the Divine will, the Syrian made the great trek into Egypt. One son had been led thither already, and now God led the rest. 'Fear not to go down into Egypt' was the Divine assurance, and Egypt was a refuge and a relief, a happy escape from privation, and God was very good.

But notice this. The happy release for one generation led straight into a cruel fate for the next. The providence which saved the Hebrew people's life out of Canaan moved directly into an experience which crushed the soul of the people for many a generation. 'And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and we cried.' That is where providence begins to wear another aspect. Here is the history. Chapter I.—Saved alive out of famine, and that manifestly of God. Chapter II.—The place of release becomes the place of slavery; the happy respite leads straight into a prolonged and bitter suffering, and this by no unfaithfulness on the people's part. Chapter I.—'Fear not to go down into Egypt.' 'Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face!' Chapter II.—'The Egyptians evil entreated us.' 'Behind a smiling providence He hides a frowning face!'

With all its high promise and hope of destiny, this race is subjected to the tyranny of a remorseless oppressor. So does the idea of providence become tangled and difficult. Here the hard questions begin. Why, if the

[1] J. E. Wakerley, *The Making of Moral Manhood*, 32.

God of Israel be Ruler of all, should He not shield them from this harm? why, especially, give a release whose fruit is to be a bitter misery?

1. It is no part of Revelation to present us with a simple and easy view of things—of which observation the text is a very obvious illustration and example. If we open our Bible with the expectation of finding there a facile clue which will enable us to reduce human history to an engaging simplicity, and answer all the problems and enigmas of experience, we have come to the wrong book. If it had any such pretension, the Bible would never have taken its unique, or indeed any, place in the great literature of the world; its shallowness would have doomed it to oblivion. There is no book of it which does not at some point bring us up against the paradoxes, the antinomies, the unexplained unfulfilments of history and experience. It asserts creation and government by a Supreme, Omnipotent and Moral Being; but it shows us a creature of finite will frustrating and apparently even defeating Omnipotence. It assumes and illustrates an all-directing Providence, but goes on to tell of that Providence retarded and diverted in all manner of inexplicable directions. It holds the belief in God's ever working and over-ruling all; but it holds it in the teeth of antagonisms and contradictions which it does not attempt to explain.

2. It is no part of religion to ignore the hard enigmas of history and experience. Religion has always had to face the fact that this is an immensely difficult and complicated world, in which even God's purposes, in whose final triumph we believe, suffer frustration and seeming defeat, and are pursued in the face of antagonisms often inexplicable in their origin and powers. Looking back over history one feels that God has had, and still has, vast difficulties with this world of ours, and that the raw material of things has never been quite tractable, even in His hands. Why it should be so, how can we tell?

Meanwhile there is this queer world as it is; with Egypt in it for Israel; with suffering in it for the holy Job; with some inexplicabl good times for some undeniably bad peopl with popularity in it for Barabbas, and a cro for Christ; with savagery in it for this twe tieth century which has been so proud of i civilization and progress. Have you any suc naive belief in the intelligence of man as t pretend that he can, or is likely to, see straigh through such problems? Said the Pope i 'The Ring and the Book':—

> There's a new tribunal now,
> Higher than God's—the educated man's.

It was sardonically said. All things are n yet put under our intelligence, nor will all th enigmas and mysteries be clear until we ar able to look at them, as the poet said of suc a seemingly simple thing as a daisy, 'fro God's side.'

¶ We must be content to remain in ver great and sorrowful ignorance of many o the mysteries of life. It will not do to mak our theories complete, and to have brisk an complacent certainties. A theory is too ofte only a shield with which a man wards off e perience, and guards himself from the lovin wounds of God. We fortify ourselves i countless ways against the Unknown, by wor by wealth, by comfort, by talk, by laughter, b philosophy, alas, even by religion. What w can all of us experience, if we will, is th reaching out of the soul to light, and truth and love; but it is easy to quench that flam by caution and unkindness and suspicion, an the anxious care for tangible things. . . . Th only way is to open our whole soul to expe ience and light and God, rejoicing in weaknes and ignorance, and humiliation, because thes are the openings through which the trut passes into the soul; our own souls, the sou of others, God—these are the eternal thing and not the fading glories, the gross sati faction of the visible world.[1]

3. It is the part of religion to recogni God's victorious working amid the actual an often inexplicable conditions of history an experience. 'The Egyptians evil entreated u . . . and the Lord brought us forth.' The

[1] A. C. Benson, *Thy Rod and Thy Staff*, 238.

the long view of things. Religion dares to ke up the unsolved and inexplicable and eave it even into its thanksgivings. It dares utter Paul's sublime audacity, 'All things ork together for good to them that love God,' ecause it takes the long view.

We do not know what obstacles God has had encounter. Someone has said: 'When we me to know as we are known, some of us will ist laugh at the ideas we once had of what mnipotence is and means.' Admit into your ought of God the idea of love and father-ness, and something has happened to your nception of Omnipotence. A young father ithin the circle of his small children is prac-cally omnipotent. Within that circle he can o what he will. Can he? He will tell you at it is ludicrously untrue. He has dis-vered long ago that he could bring up other eople's children far better and more easily an his own. Love comes in and fatherhood; nd both spell a kind of splendid limitation. low do you know it is not true also of God? he God we worship is not a bundle of cate-ories, Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipre-ence, and the like, but the God and Father f our Lord Jesus Christ. Even in His pur-ose of redemption stood Calvary, and if the ross of Jesus means anything save a mishap means that Divine Love, ere it can realize nd express itself, must encounter danger, restle with malignity, endure suffering, pass rough death itself.

Christianity is our point of view for the terpretation of life. We cannot see all ings clearly from it. It is not an explan-ion but a standpoint. Is there any other oint of view which takes us anything like e same distance in our seeing? Is there y other point of view which looks anywhere t straight to a settled despair? Faith does ot miss any single thing that makes life ignant to the human soul or perplexing to e human mind. It sees Egypt and all it ands for. It sees all the things named in aul's summary of the sinister things of the orld and of life—tribulation, distress, famine, rsecution, nakedness, peril and sword. In ll face of them all, it takes its courage in th hands and dares to believe in God.

Believing in God, there is at least a clue. A great precedent looms up. It is the Cross of Christ. For God is there to be seen bending difficulties to the accomplishment of His own great purposes. He took that murder on Calvary, which on its human side was an act of undiluted human wickedness, and through it He wrought our redemption. Faith dares to believe that such a precedent carries far. God has not finished with things yet. The end of the story of the Syrian ready to perish is not the torment of the Egyptian but the song of Miriam with her timbrel: 'I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously.' The end of Calvary is not the tomb in the garden, and the great stone fixed, but the empty grave, the Resurrection and the Life.

So over the evils of existence and the spectres of the mind which they raise faith joins with experience in the old challenge: 'Who can separate us from the love of God?'

'The riddle of the world is understood
Only by him who feels that God is good,
As only he can feel who makes his love
The ladder of his faith, and climbs above
On th' rounds of his best instincts; draws no line
Between mere human goodness and divine,
But, judging God by what in him is best,
With a child's trust leans on a Father's breast,
And hears unmoved the old creeds babble still
Of kingly power and dread caprice of will,
Chary of blessing, prodigal of curse,
The pitiless doomsman of the universe.'

. . . . . .

So heard I; and the chaos round me spread
To light and order grew; and, 'Lord,' I said,
'Our sins are our tormentors, worst of all
Felt in distrustful shame that dares not call
Upon Thee as our Father. We have set
A strange god up, but Thou remainest yet.
All that I feel of pity Thou hast known
Before I was; my best is all Thy own.
From Thy great heart of goodness mine but drew
Wishes and prayers; but Thou, O Lord, will do,
In Thine own time, by ways I cannot see,
All that I feel when I am nearest Thee!' [1]

[1] J. G. Whittier.

## A Holy People.

Deut. xxvi. 19.—'That thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God.'

This was the description Moses gave of what God designed His Israel to be: and both Isaiah and Daniel repeat the phrase. Isaiah speaks of a day when Israel would be not only re-gathered but re-sanctified as well; 'men shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord,' holy because redeemed, their holiness a visible proof of their redemption, its necessary consequence in the plan of God.

1. 'The Holy One of Israel' was one of God's most distinctive names, for He was separated from all other gods by being what none of them was, a Holy God; and Israel was intended to be separate from all other nations by being what no other nation was, 'a holy people.' This, too, is one of the characteristic marks of the true church of every age; it is meant to be 'a holy nation.' In the Church's holiness lies the only justification of its existence, and the secret of its power.

2. What, then, is the holiness that God means every redeemed soul to exhibit to the world's eye? Put into simplest form, it is just complete conformity in all things, great and small alike, to the holy will of God; being at one mind with God in all the judgments of the mind, in all the feelings of the heart, and in all the outgoings of the life; agreeing with God's estimate of things, and 'esteeming all His precepts concerning all things to be right, and hating every false way.' The holiest heart is just the heart that most thoroughly agrees with God about everything; and the holiest life is just the life that most thoroughly evidences that agreement.

3. Even where in the heart-depths there is a real agreement with God, there will still be a warfare with indwelling sin. But what constitutes the holiness of the heart is that it is never at peace with its indwelling sin. An 'earthly' man lives in sin and loves it; a 'God-begotten' man lapses into sin and loathes it. That makes all the difference between the renewed and the unrenewed; for the words of John Owen are solemnly true, 'I do not see how any man can be a true believer to whom sin of every kind is not the greatest burden and trouble and grief.'

Oh! soul, if thou would'st climb the holy Hill
And dwell with Jesus in the secret place,
Thou must set truth above men's blame or grace,
From the world's clamour keep thee very still.
Pure and inviolate thou must hold thy will,
Thy seen and unseen life keep equal pace,
For no deceit must mar thine honest face,
Thy word by ample deed thou must fulfil.[1]

## Amen.

Deut. xxvii. 16.—'And all the people shall say, Amen.'

1. There are three different kinds of Amen in the Bible.

(1) The first is the *introductory* Amen. There are only three instances of this in the Old Testament, but there are very many instances in the New. For example, in all those texts of Jesus beginning 'Verily, I say unto you,' it is the Greek word 'Amen' that is translated 'verily.' It is interesting to notice that such texts in the first three Gospels have but one 'verily,' while in the Gospel of John the 'Amen' is double—'Verily, verily, I say unto you.' No one save Jesus uses the word thus. Not one of the Apostles ever says, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you.'

(2) The second kind of Amen in the Bible is what is called the *detached* Amen. It is found in its simplest form in Deuteronomy 27. There are in this chapter many separate laws given to the people, and the instruction is for the people when the law is read by the Levites to cry aloud 'Amen.' This detached Amen is in use to-day among the Methodists and many other Christians who, in this Hebrew particle, voice their concurrence with and assent to any great truth which has touched their hearts.

(3) The third kind of Amen is called the

[1] D. F. Gurney, *A Little Book of Quiet*, 15.

*final* Amen. We use it at the end of our prayers, but it is very curious that it is almost never so used in the Bible. The Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Bible by St. Jerome, which is the basis for the Catholic Bible today, has in it two instances where Amen is used at the end of a prayer; but there are no instances in the Greek and Hebrew. It is true that the Lord's Prayer is made to end in this way in the King James Version, but there is little warrant for it, and it is omitted in the Revised Version. It is interesting to note, however, that the Epistles end in this way. All Paul's Epistles end with this word (which, however, is omitted in about half of the instances in the RV), also Peter's and two of John's, but not the Epistle of James. The Gospels terminate likewise, but not the Book of the Acts.

2. Now let us turn to the meaning.

(1) The root meaning is stability, steadiness, reliability, truth. It is found in the north and south Semitic languages alike, and everywhere it has this meaning. Something true, something that can be relied upon, something fixed, immovable. 'Amen,' when Jesus uses it in the form of 'verily, verily' means that you can build on this truth, and nothing can ever shake it. It is eternally secure. There is tremendous strength pulsing in the word. It is only a little particle—one of the smallest and most insignificant parts of speech; but Jesus could use it to build His Church upon, for the root of it means truth unshaken, immovable.

(2) But there is one other meaning found in the word. There are other particles in the Hebrew and the Greek that thus far mean as much as this, but Amen carries with it another most interesting signification. The root from which it comes means decision also, the decision of the will. Hence there is in this word not only assent to truth, but commitment to truth by the full giving of self. Thus Jesus, when He says, 'verily, verily,' means, 'I give Myself as bond for this truth. I identify Myself with it. It is a part of Me.' And when the Hebrews of old or the Apostles put in this word, it was as if each said, 'I put a seal here, and I sign in with this truth, my character, my honour, my property, everything I have. I go bond for it. I give myself with it and for it.'

¶ The little word *Amen* means, truly, verily, certainly; and it is a word of firm, heartfelt faith: as if thou saidst, 'O God and Father, those things for which I have prayed I doubt not; they are surely true and will come to pass, not because I have prayed for them, but because Thou hast commanded me to ask for them, and hast surely promised; and I am convinced that Thou art indeed God, and canst not lie. And, therefore, not because of the worthiness of my prayer, but because of the certainty of Thy promise, I do firmly believe it, and I have no doubt that an Amen will come out of it, and it will be an Amen.[1]

## Political Principles.

Deut. xxviii. 1.—'It shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth.'

THERE are two great regions of the political action of every state—foreign and domestic. By what principles should every Christian desire them to be directed? In dealing with them what ideals should every man desire to have for ever before his eyes? Let us speak first of what should be the Foreign Policy of this country.

1. To the Aryan race, to which we belong, was mainly entrusted the civilization of mankind; from it sprang mainly the arts of war and peace; the glory that was Greece belongs to it, and the grandeur that was Rome; it has been the parent of the lofty spiritualism of India, the deep philosophy of Germany, the glorious art of Italy, the dauntless energy of England. But its destiny did not culminate until, in the crucifixion of our Lord, the Semitic race, knowing not the day of its visitation, proved false to its function and its heritage. Then the torch of the Christian Revelation, which would have been extinguished for ever in the hands of the Semite, was transferred into the hands of the race of Japhet,

[1] Luther.

and soon burst into a flame which was intended to illuminate the world. Of all the families of that Aryan race we, the English of to-day, have the grandest and the most magnificent history, yet also the most perilous responsibilities. Our language is already more widely disseminated than any tongue that was ever spoken by the lips of man. It seems likely to become the almost universal language of the future. Who can exaggerate the immensity of such an influence or the awfulness of such duties? They affect many of us directly, and in endless ways. Our sons and daughters go to every quarter of the globe, and such as we are they are, and as are the lessons they have learnt in their English homes so will be the influence which they exercise in the most distant colonies.

But a vast proportion of these our national duties are summed up in the words, 'the foreign policy of England.' What then should be the object of that foreign policy? Can there, in the light of Christianity, be any other answer than this—the intellectual, the moral, the spiritual welfare of mankind? Ought we not to teach to the world the lessons of a superior wisdom, a purer justice, a loftier morality? Ought we not to inscribe on the banner of our progress that sacred Name which it is at once our highest mission and our most blessed privilege to render visible and glorious through a regenerate world? Much by God's blessing we have done; and we may say of our native country,

> Yea! she hath mighty witnesses, and though
> Her deeds of good have had their ebb and flow,
> She yet awaits in righteous strength sublime
> The calm cool judgment of all after-time.

But there is another side to the picture. Whole races have disappeared before the advancing conquests of our sons. The footsteps of our countrymen as they have passed across the world have too often been footsteps dyed in blood. Africa has known them as the buyers of the slave. The islands of the Pacific have known them as the stealers of their youth. The aborigines of Tasmania have known them as the exterminators of their race. Ruskin has not scrupled to say that the broad result of the labours of Europe 'for the salvation of the wild tribes of the New World, since the vaunted discovery of it, may be summed up in the stern sentence—death by drunkenness and smallpox.' And Froude says that, whereas at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were 1,500,000 Hottentots, in his day they were only about 20,000; the rest had perished by drink and by disease, by drink and disease which we had introduced. Ought we not to have stern searchings of heart as to the way in which we have dealt with these other sheep of Christ, though they be not of this fold—children with us of a common God, heirs with us of a common immortality? Do we not owe them an immense reparation, as well as eternal duties? And do we not owe these duties, not to them only, but to all our brethren, whether they belong to our own or to other races of mankind?

2. And if that be the only righteous answer to the question, What ought to be the one informing idea of our foreign policy? is not the answer as to our domestic policy like to it? Ought not that also to be directed simply and solely with a view to the common good of all? Is there no earnest vigilance necessary to beat back the encroachments of selfishness on the national well-being? Do we need no care to prevent the growth and the assertion of vested interests in anything which is the cause of national calamity? Is there no need of the courage which scorns all popularity save that which is bestowed by after ages on good and virtuous actions? Has there been no need, in all ages and in all lands, for legislators to escape the average? to rise above the conventional? to fix their eyes not on the interests of passing combinations, but on the immutable demands of truth and right?

¶ A lay leader of a men's class in a metropolitan church recently refused to allow industrial problems to be discussed before his group because, said he, 'the situation in the United States is all right—ninety-eight per cent. right.'

What absurdity! With gigantic conflicts between capital and labour catching the general

body of the public like victims between two millstones and grinding the life out of them; with the most intimate concerns of the people's life, such as coal, transportation, and food, settled not by the people's elected representative leaders and captains of industry; with the fear of unemployment constantly haunting millions of our families like a ghost, and the face of unemployment periodically leaping upon them like a devil—ninety-eight per cent. right? In this situation, to repress lawlessness is necessary, but it is not enough. Nothing will prove sufficient except an increasing body of men and women who refuse to content themselves with the accepted standards, who see possibilities which the multitude have not yet seen, who dare to believe in them, experiment with them, work for them, who count it one of the tests of their character to be above the average and ahead of the time.[1]

## In God's Presence.

Deut. xxix. 10.—'Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God.'

INTENSE in their significance, fresh in their solemnity, those warning words roll to us across the centuries. They express the formative principle, the regulating conception, the inspiring impulse of every greatly Christian life. The distinguishing feature of such a life is this, that it is spent always and consciously in the presence of God.

It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Towards which Time leads us, and the will
of heaven.
All is if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye.

And in proportion to our faith is the vividness and reality wherewith, like Moses, we see God—like Enoch walk, like Abraham converse, like Jacob wrestle with Him, like Elijah thrill to the inward whisper of His still small voice. There are, indeed, some eyes so dim that they catch no gleam of His Presence; some ears so dull that they never hear the music or the thunder of His voice; and there are moments when, even to the best of men, He seems silent or far off. But when the eyes are opened by prayer and penitence, when the ears are purged by listening humbly for the revelation of His will, then all life, all nature, all history, are full of Him. Then Conscience, speak she never so faintly, becomes His articulate utterance. Then Experience, seem it never so perplexing, is but the unknown pattern which He is weaving into the web of our little lives. Then, even amid the crash of falling dynasties and the struggles of furious nations, we see His guiding hand. Then the great open book of the universe reveals Him on every page, while, legibly, as on the tables of Moses, He engraves His name upon the rock tablets of the world; and clearly as on the palace wall of Belshazzar, He letters it in fire amid the stars of heaven, in flowers among the fields of spring. But, whether we see or see not, whether we hear or hear not, whether conscience and life be voiceful to us or silent, assuredly God is, and He speaks to us; assuredly every day we stand each and all of us before the Lord our God.

1. The first lesson from this thought is a sense of *warning*. It is, even for the good man, a very solemn thought that not only life in its every incident, but even the heart in its inmost secrets, lies naked and open before Him with whom we have to do. When we remember that He who chargeth even His angels with folly, and in whose sight the very heavens are not clean, is always with us; that the very loneliest solitudes are peopled with His presence; that walls do not hide or inner chambers conceal us from Him; that the deepest curtains of secrecy and midnight are to Him transparent as the blaze of noon—are we indeed so pure and innocent that there is no warning for us in that thought? If Peter, troubled by the sudden apocalypse of Christ's tenderness and power, could fall at His feet, saying, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' must there not be a similar repugnance and alarm in every willingly sinful soul? If there be such alarm in your soul, be warned in time. If you hate, if you are terrified by, the thought of God's perpetual presence, then be sure that

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 132.

there must be some deep disharmony in your being, and be sure that, while this continues, you cannot be fulfilling the law of your creation, you cannot be at peace with God.

¶ To Florence Nightingale, communion with the Unseen meant something deeper, richer, fuller, more positive than the fear of God. The fear of God is the beginning, but not the end, of wisdom, for perfect love casteth out fear. It was for the love of God as an active principle in her mind, constraining all her deeds, that she strove. When she was conscious of falling away from this grace, she knew *the pains of hell,* here and now, as the state of a soul in estrangement from the Eternal goodness. As she wrote to her friend, Miss Nicholson, May, 1846: '"The sorrows of hell compassed me about." We learn to know what these are beforehand, when we cannot command our thoughts to pray, when all our omissions give themselves form and life, and shut us up within a wall over which there is no looking, no return: when they hold us down with a resistless power, and we are hemmed in with our remembrances, like a cell compassing us about. What can the future hell be other than this? The Unspeakable Presence may be joy and peace unspeakable, but it may be a Horror, a Dweller on our Threshold, a Spirit of Fear to the stricken conscience.'[1]

2. But to all who have learnt to love and to trust in God, the thought that we stand before Him involves not only a sense of warning, but, secondly, a sense of *elevation,* of ennoblement. It is a sweet and a lofty doctrine, the highest source of all the dignity and grandeur of life. It is the thing that distinguishes us from the beasts that perish. They, so far as we know, feel no responsibility, rise to no worship, attain no knowledge, cherish no hope for the future, and have but a dull, blind memory of the past; until, their unimmortal but sinless destiny being accomplished,

Something in the darkness draws
Their foreheads downwards, and they die.

But man, how different a life is his! 'How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!' And why? Because He is a son of God, made in His image, an inheritor of His Kingdom, conscious of His presence.

3. And besides a sense of warning and of elevation, a third consequence of life spent consciously in God's presence is an unwavering sense of *duty.* And surely this sense of duty, so marked a feature in every good man's character, is a thing of extraordinary dignity. Certainly without it life is singularly contemptible, inevitably miserable. Compare a vessel rolling, water-logged and helpless, at the mercy of the storm—a wind-tossed, melancholy hulk, or a desolate wreck upon a lonely shore—compare it with the same vessel obeying a very small helm, cutting through the billows in victorious career, and making the very hurricane speed it onwards towards the destined shore; such is a human life without, and a human life with, the sense of duty. A life regardful of duty is crowned with an object, directed by a purpose, inspired by an enthusiasm, till the very humblest routine, carried out conscientiously for the sake of God, is elevated into moral grandeur. To one who lives thus the insignificant becomes important, the unpleasant delightful, the evanescent eternal.

4. But, as a fourth consequence, there is something loftier and lovelier than even a sense of duty which results from a consciousness of standing in the presence of God—it is the sense of *holiness.* A man may perform his duties, and yet not be a holy man; he may be apparently upright, but not really innocent; outwardly conscientious, but not inwardly sincere. It is one thing to be 'not far from the kingdom of God,' another to be a member thereof; one thing to be near the gate of heaven, another thing to be therein. It is mostly some cherished idol, some wilful reservation, some favourite temptation, in a word, some besetting sin, that makes men fall short of that truth in the inward parts which God requires, and which, to those who seek for it and love it, He will give.

[1] Sir Edward T. Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale,* i. 50.

¶ Always it is sin, and only it is sin, which blinds the eyes and hardens the heart of mankind. It may be the smallest of sins, one of those sins which we describe as merely amiable weaknesses; but let it be in charge of a soul and directing its course, let it be a sin which we find ourselves unable to give up, which we recognise as unworthy, and yet cling to, and we are living in the cold, we are moving in the shadows, and all our faculties are in gyves.

It would seem that the whole matter turns upon a complete unison of the two wills, the divine and the human. They must both want the same things to happen, they must both desire the same qualities, they must both be pursuing the same end. Discordance between the will of the creature and the will of its Creator results in a weakening of the consciousness of God in the heart of the creature. Men may live very religiously and yet fail to dislodge their will from some form of selfishness which is fatal to their possession by the grace of God. They may be perfectly pure, and yet vain; or wonderfully generous with their time and money, yet intolerantly wedded to their own ideas; or they may lay down their lives for their religion, and yet never have loved anybody so well as themselves.[1]

5. We stand before the Lord our God. The knowledge of this not only warns us, not only ennobles us, not only inspires us with a sense of duty, not only convinces us of the necessity for holiness, but, lastly, it encourages us with a *certainty of help and strength.* That God before whom we stand is not only our Judge and our Creator, but also our Father and our Friend. Behold Him revealed to us in Christ, our Elder Brother in the great family of God! He feels for all our infirmities. He can sympathize in all our sorrows. He has conquered all our temptations. He has borne the dread burden of all our sins. The pulse of every beating heart is known to Him. He sees every tear we shed. He considers every wish we cherish. He answers every true prayer we breathe. In the depth of humiliation He is with us. In the rough places His angels catch us by the hand. In the valley of the shadow of death His brightness illumines every dreadful step. Fear not; even the youngest and weakest He loves; let us be true to the higher law of our nature; let us remember that God sees us; and then let us doubt not, but earnestly believe that He will accept us in the Beloved as His redeemed, forgiven sons.

[1] H. Begbie, *Life Changers*, 20.

## The Known and the Unknown.

Deut. xxix. 29.—'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.'

A RELIGION that professed to reveal and explain everything, and to make the moral order of the universe and the nature and plans of God as plain to our comprehension as a map, say, of the United States, a religion that contained no mystery, would be quite as incredible as a religion that was all mystery. We find insoluble problems and undiscoverable secrets in Nature, and we expect to find them in theology. There is something hidden even in the least and lowest form of life; why not also in the highest and greatest? Do you remember Tennyson's poem?

> Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but *if* I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

The secret things spoken of in the text are, in the first instance, the destiny of the Jewish people. After the law has been proclaimed, the lawgiver enlarges upon the consequences of obedience and disobedience; he pronounces blessings on those who keep it, and curses on those who disregard it; in particular, he threatens the most terrible judgments upon the moral scepticism which laughs at the promise or the menace of God, and confidently takes its own way as though God had never spoken or would not keep His word. He declares frankly that we do not know how or when the promises or threatenings will take

effect—that is the secret thing which belongs to God alone; but the nation is under law to God nevertheless, a law which is perfectly well known; and it is this that determines its duty. Ignorant as men are of the course of Providence, of the means which God will employ to react against rebellion and crush it, of the quarter of the sky in which the thunder clouds of His judgment will accumulate; ignorant as they are also of a thousand things which at once solicit and baffle the mind, and by doing so seem to disable it for action, there is one thing of which they are not ignorant—the law of God. This has been revealed to us and to our children *for ever*. It is an unchanging and infallible guide through worlds and ages yet unborn. And it is given to us that we may do it.

The fortune or the destiny of nations is always an interesting subject for speculation. The story of the rise and fall of powers like Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, Carthage, Rome, Venice, fascinates the historian and the moralist; even for the thoughtless it is a magnificent picture, and for the wise it is a revelation. It verifies the word of God which speaks to us in this chapter; it shows us in a thousand ways that vice is the worm at the root of a nation's strength, and that righteousness alone makes nations great. Often we meet with speculations on the future of our own country or of its contemporaries and rivals. We are invited to see a greater Britain grow continually greater, until a federation of English-speaking peoples controls the affairs of the world, with a pleasing consciousness of having obtained only their due; or to see the worn-out British race, stripped of its ships, its colonies and its commerce, sinking to an inglorious end. These speculations are precisely what is meant here when we read, 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.' So far as we are concerned, the book of the future is sealed with seven seals. But our duty is not affected by that. Though we cannot tell the fortunes of the nation beforehand, we can tell on what they depend. We know that obedience to the law of God has the promise of the future. We know that industry, sobriety, justice, charity are the strength of the community; we know that pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness are its death. We know that no nation can prosper in drunkenness and uncleanness, in luxury and insolence, in the deification of might and the contempt of right; and this knowledge is given for our guidance. It never goes out of fashion. It is as true now as in the days of Moses—as true in Britain as in Israel, as true in the capitals of modern commerce as in Carthage or in Venice, as true of nations as of individuals—that only those who do the will of God abide for ever.

It is permissible to generalize this truth, and to point the applications of it which are pertinent to ourselves. Religion, it means, does not depend on the things we are ignorant of, but on the things we know. Its basis is revelation, not mystery; and it is not affected by the fact that mysteries abound. Little as we know, and much as we are ignorant of, our responsibility for what we know is unqualified. It is not possible to overstate either the dimensions of our ignorance or the urgency of our responsibility for acting up to what we know. There is always a temptation to let the first of these depress our interest in the second; ignorance—sometimes erected into a principle and designated Agnosticism—falls like a heavy frost on morality and religion. It takes the pith and virtue out of them. Now what Scripture here teaches is that this is wrong. The most perplexed and baffled man, the man who has most certainly come to the limit of his insight and who is most appalled by the opaqueness of the future, knows something; and it is on his action in view of that knowledge that his relation to God depends. He is to be tested not by what he does not understand in the infinite scheme of the universe, but by how he faces the responsibility imposed on him by what he knows. A few illustrations will make plain what this means.

(1) Many of us are interested not only in our country, but in the Church, and, much as we should like to see into the future, must acknowledge that it is very impenetrable. How long can the Churches go on upon the present footing, and in their present relations to each other? What prospect is there of closer rela-

tions between them. Do such closer relations depend in any degree on all Christians being gathered into one organization, or may they come to pass through the discovery that modes of organization are matters of comparative indifference, and that Christians may be thoroughly one, in the only sense in which Christ is interested in their unity, though they are organized in many different and independent ways? Are the masses of the population which are at present outside all the Churches going to be brought within the existing organizations, or will the gospel perhaps take root among them in ways unexampled hitherto, developing new types of thought, of organization, and of moral effort? Will Christ establish His ascendancy upon the earth in ways no one has dreamt of? Will the words He spoke of the Temple at Jerusalem—'There shall not be left one stone upon another'—be spoken of our Churches? or what will their future be? These are simply questions which we cannot answer. They are like the question the disciples put to Jesus after the Resurrection: 'Lord, dost thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' The answers belong to the things which the Father has kept in His own power. But our ignorance does not in the least affect our duty, and when such questions rise in our minds we have only to recall how Jesus answered the disciples: 'Ye shall be my witnesses.' Even if the future were revealed to us beforehand it would not be intelligible: it is only as we grow up to things and live through them that they enter into our minds. We cannot predict and cannot effectually plan the future of the Christian societies in Britain; but if we use them to penetrate life with testimony to Jesus, we may be sure that they will not fail, and that no future will leave the soul without a home.

(2) Cognate to this is a question which has also exercised many minds and has had serious practical consequences—the question of the future of those who die without having heard the gospel. It was once believed in the Church that the heathen who die in their heathen state perish everlastingly, without exception and without hope. Every time the clock ticks, it was said, a soul passes out of time into eternity, and all over heathendom that means passes from earth to hell. Every twenty-four hours from eighty to a hundred thousand souls die this awful death. This belief was regarded if not as the only, yet as the most urgent and imperative, motive of missions; it was under the constraint of it that missions were first organized in modern times, and it was assumed as an unquestionable piece of Christian faith. No one, we are well aware, would give it this place any longer. What the future of the heathen is, and how it is related to their present, we simply cannot tell. The curtain that falls at death is as impenetrable for us as it was for the first man, and we cannot see past it a single inch. But our duty to the heathen depends not upon what we do not know but upon what we do; and that is clear enough to supply all the motives for missions that we need. We know the life that human beings lead where the name of Jesus is unknown—its darkness, poverty, degradation, despair. We know what our own life would be if everything were taken out of it which it owes to Him—all our Christian convictions, our Christian hopes, our Christian ideals, affections, and energies. We know how much Christ could be to the heathen, and experience has taught us how much they could be to Him. We know what treasures of devotion, of faith and love and obedience He has already found in the hearts of men of all races—black and red and yellow as well as white. We know that God will have all men to be saved. We know that it is our Lord's will that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations. We know what the dictate of love is. We are debtors to all our brethren of mankind; we owe them the gospel. And whatever it may mean to them in the future not to have heard it while they lived,—a question to which we can give no answer whatever—it is certainly a grave sin in us if we have it and keep it to ourselves. We have every motive to missions in what we know, and as against this our ignorance does not count at all.

(3) To pass to a somewhat different illustration, many people are exercised about the future of their children more than about any-

thing else that God has kept to Himself. They would like to know how their sons will bear themselves in the battle of life, and especially how they will face its temptations. Will they pass victorious where their fathers stumbled and fell? or will their fathers be humbled and horrified to see their old sins looking out on them from the eyes of their sons? What kind of settlement will their daughters have in the days to come? Will they marry, and happily? or will it be necessary to make them independent of any resources but their own? If only we knew what to provide against! Of all these things we neither know nor can know anything: the future is wholly in the hand of God. But we do know what is the will of God both for ourselves and for those who come after us; and it is what we know that fixes our duty. Above all other Books in the Bible, Deuteronomy is the Book of religious education and of the promises attached to it. 'These words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' No duty could be enforced more urgently, and in our blank ignorance of the future there is none upon which so much depends. If we want to have any insurance against its painful possibilities, it is here we must find it. What God requires of parents is not a provision for the future of their children which enables them to defy Providence, but such a training of their children in the knowledge of God and in obedience to Him as will make them secure of God's friendship. It is a training *to do all the words of this law*, and where it has been effectively given the future may be safely left with God.[1]

## The Word in the Heart.

Deut. xxx. 14.—'The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.'

THE writer of this Book declares that the law is primarily in the heart of man. It is not outside of him—brought to him; it is within him. It is in his heart—that is, in his consciousness; it is in his mouth—that is, it is recognized by him, and, consciously or unconsciously, is testified to by him. And what is true of the law of God is true of the gospel of God and of all really religious truth.

1. It is thus that we know that there is a difference between right and wrong. We know that there is righteousness and unrighteousness, as we know that there is the beautiful and the ugly, the true and the false. This is a fundamental fact. This is the anchorground of religion—we know that there is righteousness. It is the foundation on which everything else is built. It is right to do right whether there is a God or not. It is right to do right whether there is a future life or not. It is right to do right whether there is a good God or an evil God. If the devil is God, if as the result of right doing a man is going to be plunged into eternal misery, still, if he is a man, he will wish to do right. Righteousness is the fundamental fact; and we know righteousness. A man who does not know the difference between righteousness and wickedness, who has only the conception of honesty that it is a best policy, belongs to a moral lunatic asylum.

¶ The most dull, the most imbecile, at a certain moment turn round, at a certain point will hear no further argument, but stand unflinching by their own dumb, irrational sense of right. It is not only by steel or fire, but through contempt and blame, that the martyr fulfils the calling of his dear soul. Be glad if you are not tried by such extremities. But although all the world ranged themselves in one line to tell 'This is wrong,' be you your own faithful vassal and the ambassador of God—throw down the glove and answer, 'This is right.'[1]

2. In precisely the same way, the great majority of men have some inward consciousness of God. That is, they have some inward consciousness of what Matthew Arnold calls 'a power not ourselves that makes for righteous-

[1] J. Denney.

[1] R. L. Stevenson.

ness.' They have some inward consciousness of a help on which they can lay hold and by which they can be aided. This consciousness does not define God to them. It does not even go so far in definition as to declare whether He exists in three persons or in one person. But in the heart of humanity there is a sense of 'a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness.' Substantially all nations are worshipping nations; substantially all peoples are reverent peoples. The reverence may be degraded into superstition, it may be so impregnated with evil forces as to pull men down rather than to lift them up; but the sense of superior beings or a superior Being, the sense of superior powers or a superior Power, the sense of Someone or Somewhat outside one on whom humanity may lay hold, and who lays hold on humanity—that is as universal as the sense of music or of art.

¶ Voltaire examined the position now taken up by the Agnostic—but he could not accept it. His creed contained this much—'I believe in God.' In that belief 'one finds difficulties,' he said; 'in the belief that there is no God, absurdities.' *'Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer'* was one of his maxims. Such a flash of insight may be counted unto Voltaire for some of the righteousness he sadly lacked.[1]

3. Our belief in Christ is something more than an historical or theological belief. We open our Bible and we read the story of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and as we read that life we see the quality and character which shine through it. We believe in righteousness, and when we read that life we see there righteousness luminous and eloquent. We believe in God, and as we read that life we see the masked God withdrawing His mask, and letting His own face shine through. We may not believe the ecclesiastical definitions of Christ, as we may not believe the ecclesiastical definitions of God; but deeper than ecclesiastical definitions lies this transcendent fact, that in the life and character of Christ there shines forth in its highest form what we mean by righteousness.

[1] H. Lewis, *Modern Rationalism*, 41.

The world thought power was Divine, majesty was Divine, justice was Divine, greatness was Divine; and then there came One upon the earth, without power, without external majesty, and without the signs and symbols of greatness; but He was patient, gentle, heroic, sympathetic—nay, more, He rejoiced to bear not only the sorrows but the sins of others. And when that life was held up before humanity, humanity said, That is the Divinest yet; there is more majesty in love than in power, there is more strength in patience than in force. The heart of humanity answered to the portraiture of Christ. We believe in Christ because Christ draws out of us that which was before within us, unconscious and unknown. A man may take that story and read it through and wonder whether Jesus ever lived, and still believe in Christ. He may take that story and read it through and deny all the ecclesiastical deductions that have been drawn from it, and still believe in Christ. For to believe in Christ is this: To see a true manhood and a real Divineness in that kind of life. And that belief is in the heart of humanity.

¶ Jesus need not be described as the 'Redeemer,' need not be explained as the 'Propitiation' for the sins of the whole world, need not be commended as our 'Advocate' with the Father. It is sufficient to teach with His teaching. Love of God—the will conformed to the will of God, the heart hungering and thirsting after God, the affections of the mind set upon the things of God—this is sufficient to deliver the soul from its sins; and this is the heart and centre of the Galilean revelation.

In all this the spirit of Jesus is manifest. For not only is the teaching His teaching, but in Him as in no other being who has ever lifted up the face of man from the dust we behold the will of God, the divine Will which has brought creation into existence and set in motion the laws of the spiritual universe. He impersonates for us the inconceivable, the unimaginable, the infinite. He humanises the superhuman, He leads us so convincingly out of the delusions of the visible and so confidently into the realities of the invisible that truly we can say of Him, He came from God.[1]

[1] H. Begbie, *Life Changers*, 32.

4. There are not a few in our time who are asking for the evidence of immortality. They study nature, and evolution, and the Scriptures, and buttress, by these methods, a frail faith in immortality. Could there be a better argument for immortality than that attributed by some writer to a French Christian whose friend concluded a long argument to prove that the soul is not immortal? The Christian replied, 'Probably you are right; probably you are not immortal; but *I am.*' The witness is in ourselves. Not a witness that we are going to live for ever. That is not immortality. The witness is in ourselves that we are something more than the physical organization which we inhabit. What is the fundamental evidence of immortality? To live a life that is worth being immortal. That is the evidence. Let a man give himself up to his appetite, let him indulge himself in pleasure, let him make a god of his belly, as Paul says; or let him stand on a little higher plane than that, let him live simply for what he can make out of the world, let him make money his god, let him live for the material things, putting his whole life into material things—to that man you cannot prove the immortality of the soul. He who has not immortality never understands it. Immortality is not proved, it is experienced. We may accept or we may reject the Bible pictures of immortality. We may take them as literal truth, or we may take them as impassioned and imaginative utterances. We may rejoice in them, or we may not care for them. These all lie outside the realms of interior spiritual faith. We know what we are if we are living in the realm of faith and hope and love. We know that this spiritual life does not depend on the physical organization. That is, we know that we are more than the house we live in and the tools we use.

¶ On the other side of the Atlantic, Emerson told of two American senators who, each in his own way, spent twenty-five years in searching for evidence of the immortality of the soul. And Emerson marvels that they failed to notice that the impulse that prompted them to seek that evidence so patiently through all the years was in itself the strongest proof they could desire.

## Life or Death.

Deut. xxx. 19.—'I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life' (RV).

1. This passage may be said to sum up the teaching of the Old Testament about responsibility as resting upon the two fundamental facts of our moral nature, the conscience and the will.

(1) *Conscience* enables us to know the commandment of God, to distinguish between good and evil. 'The word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart.' There may be puzzling cases, cases of casuistry, genuine problems and doubts about our duty; moreover, conscience may be blinded or perverted by repeated acts of a rebellious will; but, if we are honest, we must admit that we have this inward light of conscience, that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it distinguishes between right and wrong with so little difficulty that we hardly, if at all, notice its operation. If we had no means of distinguishing between good and evil, it would be idle mockery to talk of responsibility or choice. But we have. God sets before us, in many forms of teaching and experience, life and death, blessing and cursing; and He has given us, in conscience, a faculty for recognizing these alternatives. 'Therefore choose.'

¶ Within this erring passionate mortal self sits a supreme calm immortal mind whose powers I do not know; but it is stronger than I; it is wiser than I; it never approved me in any wrong; I seek counsel of it in my doubts; I repair to it in my dangers; I pray to it in my undertakings. It seems to me the face which the Creator uncovers to his child.[1]

(2) The other foundation of responsibility is *the will.* Here again there are problems which occur at one time or another to most minds, problems to which the human reason has never found an answer. Free-will and omnipotence, free-will and 'fore-knowledge absolute,' free-will and causation—philosophy has puzzled

[1] Emerson.

over these contradictions since it began, but has 'found no end in wandering mazes lost.' And yet hardly anyone whose mind is not bemused with argument doubts the existence of his will, his power of choice. We exercise this power every moment of our waking lives, deciding upon all sorts of actions great and small for all sorts of reasons, but conscious, however much we may be constrained by external causes, that the actual decision is our own, that we are responsible for our actions. 'Therefore choose life.'

To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
And the High Soul climbs the High way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way, and a Low.
And every man decideth
The Way his soul shall go.[1]

2. Now it would be useless to try to define in detail what choosing life means for each of us. Each must do that for himself by the light of his own conscience. We are not like ignorant savages or the denizens of some forgotten slum, who need to be shown the very elements of right and wrong. Our knowledge is quite far enough ahead of our practice; and if we put into practice what we know of our duty, our knowledge will grow quite fast enough for our needs. What each one of us has to do, if we have not done it already, is to take a few quiet minutes to ourselves, wherever we can best get them, and put this question of choice to ourselves, not as a vague general question, but in the light of our knowledge of ourselves, our needs, our temptations, our past life, our future career—all in fact that makes the question a definite one for us.

If we do this, we shall find that the question of our choice presents itself in a twofold aspect. There will be our own private concerns, our own character and career to consider. 'Am I going to live a straight life? Am I going to reject every sort of deceit and untruthfulness? Am I going to keep my tongue from evil, to speak no slander or impurity, no, nor listen to it? Am I going to work honestly and cheerfully and make the best use of whatever talents God has given me?' We will naturally ask questions like these, each according to his own conscience and knowledge of himself. But among them will come the question of our duty towards the society to which we belong. All men live in a society of some sort and must frame their lives and make their choice with some reference to the society of which they are members, whether it be the Church or the nation, the county, the town, or the parish.

Do not let us be deceived by the very common but disastrous mistake of thinking that any of our actions are too slight and trivial to matter. No action which depends upon moral choice, this choice between good and evil, is too slight to matter. No person of sufficient understanding to make this choice can escape the responsibility on the plea of insignificance. Life is for the most part made up of little things. Any one of us is very unlikely ever to be tempted to commit some glaring crime like murder, just as any one of us is very unlikely to

Be called upon to face
Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
Great issues, good or bad, for human kind.

But we are called upon, every hour, to 'keep our tongue from evil, and our lips from speaking guile,' to 'seek peace, and ensue it.' We are called upon to choose between slackness and industry, between courtesy and boorishness, between obedience and disloyalty, between, on the one hand, that spirit which will tend to build up true union and fellowship of aim as a real City of God, and on the other hand that low and selfish existence which tends to make society a mere herding together of individuals who are corrupted instead of improved by association one with another.

¶ A healthy soul stands united with the Just and the True, as the magnet arranges itself with the pole, so that he stands to all beholders like a transparent object betwixt them and the sun, and whoso journeys towards the sun journeys towards that person. He is

[1] John Oxenham.

thus the medium of the highest influence to all who are not on the same level. Thus men of character are the conscience of the society to which they belong.[1]

## The Leader.

Deut. xxxi. 6.—'The Lord thy God, he it is that doth go before thee.'

When people travelled on the Continent in olden days they used to be preceded by a courier, and how much their comfort depended on the courier may be read in any of our older books of travel. It was the courier who arranged the stages. It was he who had everything ready at the stopping-places. Familiar with every road, he went before, and the token of his advance was preparation. Nothing was so important as the courier's character—the comfort of the whole journey depended on it. If he was drunken or careless, there was constant trouble; if he was faithful, everything went well. And God, we may say with reverence, is our Courier, familiar with every road and every halting-place, perfectly faithful, infinitely wise, loving us with an everlasting love. It is God *with* us who gives the joy of peace, but God *before* us who gives the joy of preparation. When a man wakens to a prevenient love, he can face anything and everything with fortitude. For not only is everything prepared, so that he shall have strength to do it and to bear it; but he himself by every turn of Providence is being prepared for all that is to come. That was the faith of Christ about the future when He said to His own, 'Let not your heart be troubled.' It was not only that He was always with them, though that is a mighty and a glorious truth. It was that in every to-morrow there is God, shaping, arranging, ordering, preventing, weighing the burden for to-morrow's strength, smoothing the pathway for to-morrow's feet. For with God there is no future and no past. He dwells above all boundaries of time. With Him a thousand years are as one day, and one day is as a thousand years. And the secret things belong unto the Lord, who has His dwelling in the eternal now, and who seeth altogether and at once that which unfolds itself to us in time successively.

1. 'The Lord . . . he it is that doth go before thee.' It was the certainty of that that made the difference to the great commander of Israel; and we can all understand the difference it made. It gave him in the highest way, on the highest level, that which, even in ordinary ways and naturally, gives men courage and endurance—the sense of being *led* and not merely *sent* on a hard enterprise. Think what a difference it makes to men in meeting difficulties, privations, dangers, if their eyes are set on a leader whom they know and trust, even though he be but a man like themselves.

¶ I shall always remember a description given to me once of a body of English troops charging up a slope under heavy fire to gain a strong position. As they charged on, and when the enemy's fire had begun to tell seriously on them, they came for a while under shelter: the losses and the danger ceased, and they stopped to pull themselves together. But then came the real trial: beyond the shelter there was another open stretch of slope, fully exposed; they had found out what advancing under fire meant, and they saw it would be worse than ever on there. It was one of those moments that bring out in men the natural love of life, that make it hardest to keep straight and firm. It was the starting again that went so much against the grain: starting again, with the experience of past loss, to the certainty of more loss—no one quite liked to begin—and they were already staying under the shelter a bit longer than was needed: it seemed almost as though they might refuse to come out and go on. And then, by one man's act, through God's grace, it all came right again: a young officer sprang out on to the mound at the edge of the shelter, and with a cheer the men followed him unfalteringly. It was the lead they wanted, the sense of some one going before them, the sense of having some one to follow loyally—unto death if need be.[1]

2. That call to follow one we trust, that

[1] Emerson.

[1] F. Paget, *The Redemption of War*, 28.

sense of one who goes before us—it is a wonderful aid to courage and perseverance when things are hard with us. And there is one fight in which we all want it, in which we all may have it—the fight, the very real, stiff fight against our temptations to do wrong. 'The Lord . . . he it is that doth go before thee.' It is hard to face being laughed at, being scored off, being looked down on for doing what is right. But Christ has gone before us on *that* road; He was despised; they mocked Him and laughed at Him. We have a Leader to follow when we are tried that way. It is hard to put up with injustice, to forgive, quite heartily to forgive, one's enemies; but He has gone before us there: He prayed for the men who were driving the nails through His hands on Calvary. It is hard to give up pleasures, to say 'no' to one's natural desires, to keep one's body in subjection; but He has gone before us in that: He fasted forty days; He spent whole nights in prayer upon the hills; He had nowhere to lay His head. It is hard to bear pain patiently, or to go on with the same weary burden day after day; but we can never have so much to bear as He bore. It will be hard, perhaps, to face death rightly, calmly, when the time comes; but on that mysterious journey also He has gone before us; and thousands upon thousands of His soldiers have quietly and fearlessly advanced to die because they were quite sure that He would be with them there; that He would not fail them nor forsake them in that awful unknown strife. 'The Lord, . . . he it is that doth go before thee.'

3. It is wonderful to think of the great army that has followed, that is following, Him who has gone before upon that way of truth and loyalty and patience. Some in one sort of work, some in another, they have set themselves to press on up that rough, weary road; stumbling often, it may be, but not falling out; sticking to it day after day, to keep a pure, unselfish purpose, and to do their duty. Men and women, rich and poor, young and old, soldiers, students, statesmen, labourers, men of business—temptation comes on them, and weakness hinders them, and past sins, it may be, shame them; but they seek His pardon and they humbly pray that anyhow He will not cast them off, or leave them desolate in the darkness. And so they struggle on—nearer all the while, it may be, than they imagine to Him who goes before them; surer year by year of His constant care and love for them; surer that, for all the roughness and steepness, there is no way like His; no other way in which a man so grows in manliness and strength, so learns to love both God and man.

Dear Christ move on before!
Ah, let me follow where Thy feet have trod;
Then shall I keep, 'mid life's perplexities,
The Golden Pathway of the Will of God.[1]

[1] Florence Barclay.

# COURAGE.

Deut. xxxi. 6.—'Be strong and of a good courage.'
Josh. i. 6.—'Be strong and of a good courage.'
Josh. i. 7.—'Only be thou strong and very courageous.'
Josh. i. 9.—'Be strong and of a good courage.'
Josh. i. 18.—'Only be strong and of a good courage.'

Courage is simply strength of heart. Subjection to fear is weakness, bondage, feverish unrest. To be afraid is to have no soul that we can call our own; it is to be at the beck and call of alien powers, to be chained and driven and tormented; it is to lose the life itself in the anxious care to keep it. Many people are so afraid to die that they have never begun to live. But courage emancipates us and gives us to ourselves, that we may give ourselves freely and without fear to God.

## I. The Call to Courage.

The stirring trumpet-call that came to Joshua and his men was much needed, for they were about to enter upon a perilous

adventure, the conquest of Canaan—an adventure from which their fathers had turned back, defeated and dismayed.

1. *Physical courage.*—This was the first requirement, and it is a quality of which man has ever stood in need. Since the far-off days when he roamed a wild denizen of the forest, he has had to fight for his life and for the defence of all dear to him. Some have disparaged physical courage on the ground that it is a quality possessed in equal or even greater degree by members of the brute creation. The rage of the Berserker and the stoicism of the tortured Indian are brutish rather than human. But this is to ignore the fact that physical courage is really a nobler quality in man than in the brutes, because of man's greater intelligence and sensibility. In other words it is never purely physical. There is a world of difference between courage and insensibility to danger. A man may rush into danger without hesitation, simply because he does not know what danger means. The brave man is intelligent; he faces danger because he understands it, and is prepared to meet it. The more keenly we are awake to the perils of life, the higher and grander is the possibility of being truly brave.

'After all, if there is no fear, there is no courage. I sometimes hear of men, of whom it is said, "They do not know what fear is." Well, if that is so, such an individual is devoid of courage, for the very essence of courage consists in the appreciation of fear, and a persistence in duty notwithstanding. . . . General Gordon has told us that he was always subject to fear. "For my part," he once said, "I am always frightened and very much so." And yet no one in history has a reputation more honestly earned for this real kind of courage, a courage won by personal victory over fear. Herein lies the essence of the experience of the vast majority of our men, fearing fire, and loathing it as they do, they yet "stick" it, because it is their duty.'[1]

When Mary Slessor of Calabar, who had more than a woman's share of timidity, so that she was, for instance, afraid of crowds, and would never cross a city street alone, faced and quelled mobs of drunken savages, her courage was great in proportion to her sensibility.

Men of all nations and in all ages have manifested a surprising degree of physical courage. Of this, the Great War supplied innumerable proofs, as indeed every war has done. Sebastopol trenches were an inferno 'yet the men would refuse to report themselves sick, lest they should throw more labour on their comrades. They would draw their blankets over their heads and die without a word.'[1]

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after reading the roll call of the heroes of his country, finally declares, 'time would fail me to tell' all the stories of their mighty deeds (Heb. xi. 32). Much more truly might that be said as we survey the records of the War, and the whole annals of the race.

Few qualities are more universally admired and valued than physical courage. This may arise out of a deep racial instinct that, without courage, man cannot live. Be that as it may, the tale of valour never fails to thrill the heart, and, as with the ancient Romans, so still, the man of courage (*virtus*) is preeminently the hero (*vir*). Some have even urged the necessity, or at least the utility, of war as a school of courage. In time of peace, it is said, men grow soft and spiritless, and the breed of heroes dies. But there is a sufficient answer to this hateful and detestable doctrine. It is nobly given in a poem by Eliot Crawshay-Williams, written in Egypt during the War.

Shall courage die
Because man take not from Time's hand
The ruthless scythe, and strew the land
With unripe harvest of humanity?
Must courage die
If it be not sustained with blood
And nurtured on the rare rich food
Of corpses battered in brutality?
Can courage die
While there is still a sea to roam,

[1] E. J. Kennedy, *With the Immortal Seventh Division*, 149.

[1] Sir E. T. Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, 317.

Shouting destruction, spewing foam;
While there is yet the boundless air
To conquer; while man still may dare
The desert and the wilderness,
The lonely pinnacles that confess
No victor save the eagle; while
Woman and man must face the vile
Onslaught of sickness, and sustain
Infinite subtleties of pain,
While pangs of death and pangs of birth
Compass existence on this earth,
And every soul that's conscious knows
Hourly a strife with inward foes?
While all around us terrors lie,
Can courage die? Can courage die?
I'll not believe it; no, not I![1]

2. *Higher forms of courage.*—It thus appears that courage may be displayed in many fields other than the battlefield. Courage will never die while human life is lived under its present conditions. In its very essence it is a struggle for existence.

(1) *Against the rigours of Nature.*—The courageous and hardy races have been those who fought and vanquished Nature rather than their fellowmen—the patient ploughman, the weather-beaten shepherd, the daring fisherman. In the struggle for the mastery of the sea and of the air, in the fight against arctic cold and tropic heat, there is scope for the highest courage. Witness Captain Scott's last message from the Antarctic: 'Goodbye—I am not at all afraid of the end, but sad to miss many a simple pleasure which I had planned for the future in our long marches. . . . We are in a desperate state—feet frozen, etc., no fuel, and a long way from food, but it would do your heart good to be in our tent, to hear our songs and our cheery conversation. . . . Later—We are very near the end. . . . We did intend to finish ourselves when things proved like this, but we have decided to die naturally without.'[2]

(2) *Against the various ills of life.*—What higher courage than his who bears all the buffeting of fate without flinching, who by sheer strength of will compels the frail and fainting body to obey the unconquerable spirit's behests? Sir Walter Scott, toiling relentlessly to clear a burden of debt, when racked with pain and knowing that he was a dying man, only bidding them shut the door lest the members of his family should hear his groaning, is surely an example of supreme courage. So is Robert Louis Stevenson. 'When ophthalmia confines him to a darkened room, he writes by the diminished light. When after hemorrhage, his right hand has to be held in a sling, he writes some of his *Child's Garden* with his left hand. When the hemorrhage has been so bad that he dare not speak, he dictates a novel in the deaf-and-dumb alphabet. . . . Scott himself, after the crash, has not left behind him a more inspiring example of indomitable strength of purpose. The two men stand together . . . as types of that splendid ignorance of the meaning of defeat on which British men most pride themselves. Each new assault of outrageous fortune they understand only as a challenge, never as a doom.'[1]

It is this spirit which often glorifies the toil and struggles of the poor. Many are the nameless ones who, with no biographer to chronicle their struggles, with no hope of glory to sustain their hearts, have yet, in humble obscurity, shown the stuff that heroes are made of. When Polycarp of Smyrna was on his way to Rome to meet a martyr's death, his friend Ignatius wrote him, 'Stand thou firm and be as an anvil when it is smitten. It is the part of a great athlete to receive blows and be victorious. But especially must we, for God's sake endure all things.' Great is the courage of the hammer, to smite the fearless blow, but greater is the courage of the anvil, to be smitten and battered, but never beaten.

(3) *Against moral and social evils.*—'To see what is right and not to do it,' said Confucius, 'is want of courage.' So it is; and the noblest form of courage is to stand fearless for God and right. Not every man can do this; not every man who displays physical courage can rise to the heights of moral courage. It has been acutely said that few men have the courage to appear as good as they really are. There

[1] *The Path of Glory.*
[2] J. M. Barrie, *Courage*, 31.

[1] J. Kelman, *The faith of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 177.

is far more of moral than of physical cowardice in the world. Which of us can claim to have a hero's record on the spiritual battlefield? Yet here is where the supreme struggle is fought, as St. Paul felt, who, recking little of perils by land and sea, declares, 'Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places' (Eph. vi. 12, RV). So long as this conflict lasts, while dark forces of evil sit enthroned, while bodies and souls of men are enslaved, while our human race still wanders in the wilderness, and sees only afar off the Promised Land, the supreme need must be for courage, a lofty and beneficent courage, a loving and pitiful courage, a courage to confess loyalty to the good and true, to champion the weak and the fallen, in God's name to dare and to endure, boldly to advance the standard of the Cross, till the long deferred hope of humanity is realized, and the Promised Land is won.

'I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.' [1]

Courage is our only safety and our only hope. It is the defender of all the virtues. 'Courage is the standing army of the soul, which keeps it from conquest, pillage, and slavery. Unless we are brave we can hardly be truthful, or generous, or just, or pure, or kind, or loyal. . . . You must be brave in order to fulfil your own possibilities of virtue. Courage is essential to guard the best qualities of the soul, and to clear the way for their action, and make them move with freedom and vigour.' [2] 'Courage is the thing. All goes if courage goes. What says our glorious Johnson of courage: "Unless a man has that virtue he has no security for preserving any other." ' [3]

[1] Blake.
[2] Henry Van Dyke, *Manhood, Faith and Courage*, 57.
[3] J. M. Barrie, *Courage*, 38.

II. The Roots of Courage.

The prime roots of courage are two—faith and devotion.

1. *Faith in God.*—It is not to be denied that much courage has its root in self-confidence, that is, faith in the strength of one's own arm and heart. Napoleon was fearless because he had supreme confidence in himself and in his destiny. Cæsar, though a landsman, was unaffrighted in the storm, and to the terrified crew who thought the boat was sinking, he made the proud reply, 'Not while Cæsar and his fortunes are on board.' Henley writes,

Under the bludgeonings of Chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

. . . . . .

I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

This spirit of self-confident courage, the 'head bloody but unbowed,' magnificent as it often is, is held up to abhorrence in Scripture. It is far removed from the courage of the man of God, whose trust is not in himself but in a higher power. Too often it is defiant of Heaven. Its type is the proud war-lord and the mighty captain, its emblems, the mailed fist and the iron heel. Yea, Satan himself, if Milton be believed, lifted his head from the burning lake, 'bloody but unbowed.' Such a spirit in mortal man is a poor and vain thing. It means leaning on an arm of flesh, and the arm of flesh will fail. 'Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength' (Is. xi. 31-35). Sooner or later the strain will prove too great, and the courage of self-confidence will crack. 'For the day of the Lord shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low. . . . And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day' (Is. ii. 12, 17).

True courage has its root in faith in God. Fear in all its forms is an unbelieving thing, a kind of atheism. The man who is afraid has lost his faith, he no longer believes in God.

Peter in the court of the High Priest's house was a coward because his faith was faint and uncertain; Peter after the Resurrection was a hero because his faith had triumphed over the weakness of his nature. The early martyrs died with smiles on their uplifted faces, enduring torture and death as seeing Him who is invisible.'[1] Courage is born of the conviction that God is with us and will never fail us. As was said to Joshua, 'The Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.'

Sen God does us defend,
We sal prevail unto the end.[2]

'"Wait on the Lord." That is the truest and deepest source of courage. . . . Without God what can you do? You are a frail, weak, tempted, mortal creature. The burdens of life will crush you, the evils of sin will destroy you, the tempests of trouble will overwhelm you, the darkness of death will engulf you. But if you are joined to God, you can resist and endure and fight and conquer, in his strength.'[3]

Much has been written and spoken in disparagement of Calvinism, but undoubtedly there was something in it which put iron in men's blood, and nourished heroes. That something was an unquenchable faith in God. Whence came the courage of a Knox, a Renwick, a Cromwell, a Bunyan? It was rooted in a conviction of God's almighty power to save, and of His unchangeable will to reign till His Kingdom shall come, over all the earth. The man who has this faith has a courage which cannot be uprooted, and, like David, may defy every foe. 'Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts' (1 Sam. xvii. 45).

2. *Devotion.*—Devotion is the second prime root of courage. The most timid of creatures will fight in defence of its young, with a courage bred of devotion. When a mother sees her child in danger, self is for the moment utterly forgotten, and she becomes capable of the highest heroism. Men in the War had similar experiences when, in devotion to their comrades and their country, they became utterly self-forgetful and self-sacrificing. Donald Hankey thus describes the feelings of a young officer, after his first baptism of fire. 'It suddenly struck him that during his fortnight as a section commander he had actually forgotten to be afraid, or even nervous! It was really astounding. . . . He had been so anxious for his section that he had never once thought of himself! With a feeling of utter astonishment, he realized that he had stumbled upon the very roots of courage—unselfishness.'[1]

Such is the secret of that courage which sustains the toilers of God amid the darkness of heathendom, or the squalor of the slums. It is not merely their faith in God but also their devotion to men. Moses praying that, if his people be not forgiven, his name also may be blotted out of God's book, Paul willing to be accursed for his brethren's sake, Father Damien dying for the lepers, and Livingstone for the Africans, Grenfell enduring the rigours of Labrador—these all have the same spirit of fearlessness born of devotion.

### III. The Master's Courage.

Here, as always, the Master is our pattern. His was a perfect courage, because rooted in a perfect faith in God, and a perfect devotion to men.

And who the bravest of the brave,
The bravest hero ever born?
'Twas one who dared a felon's grave,
Who dared to breathe the scorn of scorn.
Nay, more than this: when sword was drawn,
And vengeance waited for His word,
He looked with pitying eyes upon
The scene, and said, 'Put up thy sword.'
O God! could man be found to-day
As brave to do, as brave to say?

Have you thought of the Master as the bravest of the brave? Yet so He was. He had the courage to be perfectly loyal to God, the courage to speak the truth, to be unpopular,

[1] H. W. Mabie, *The Life of the Spirit*, 121.
[2] Inscription on Huntly Castle.
[3] Henry Van Dyke, *Manhood, Faith and Courage*, 65.

[1] D. Hankey, *A Student in Arms*, i. 145.

to stand utterly alone. He had the courage to set His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem, knowing well what awaited Him there, the courage to bear shame and death, darkness and spiritual desolation, because He had taken upon His soul the sin of the world.

Have you observed that courage was His favourite word? The heartening phrase, so frequently on the Master's lips, 'Be of good cheer,' is rightly translated by Moffatt, 'Courage!' and that has more of the ring of the original about it. To the man sick of the palsy the Master said, 'Son, courage!' to the timid woman who touched the hem of His garment, 'Daughter, courage!' to the affrighted disciples on the wild night sea, 'Courage! It is I. Be not afraid.' It was one of His great words on the eve of His Passion, 'In the world you have trouble, but Courage! I have conquered the world.'[1] And when He appeared to Paul in prison on the night after his arrest in Jerusalem, His word was still, 'Courage!'

He it is in whom His people trust. His name is Immanuel, God with us in the fight, a God who will never fail nor forsake His own in the direst hour of peril and of need. He it is who inspires courage by His example and by His spirit. 'There is a quaint tale in the legends of King Arthur which tells of a Knoll of Change that had the power to transform cowards into brave men. The real Knoll of Change has proved to be the Hill of Calvary, and it has lost none of its power.[2]

> It makes the coward spirit brave,
> And nerves the feeble arm for fight.

The Captain of our salvation ever goes before us. Where the fight is thickest, there is He, an ever present help. And still He utters that resounding word, 'Follow me.' It is a clarion call that must surely wake an echo in every heart that cherishes a spark of manhood.

> He who would valiant be
> 'Gainst all disaster,
> Let him in constancy
> Follow the Master.

J. H. Morrison.

[1] John xii. 33 (Moffatt's Translation).
[2] J. Kelman, *Salted with Fire*, 68.

## The Lord's Portion.

Deut. xxxii. 9.—'The Lord's portion is his people.'

There is no possession of which a fine nature feels so proud as the possession of a human soul. An inferior nature values above all things the ownership of houses and lands. But to a spiritual mind the greatest inheritance in the world is the mastery over another's spirit—especially over another's heart. We often use the expression, 'My own one, my own dearest.' At these moments we feel the sense of possession to be a peculiar luxury. We would not resign this particular kind of mastery for all the wealth of India and all the land of Canada. The sense of possession which says to a human soul, 'My own!' is the climax of a conscious power. Now, that is what I take the passage before us to mean. 'The Lord's portion is his *people*'—not the mastery over stars and systems, not the control of storms and hurricanes, not the command of force and thunderbolts, but the empire over human hearts; *this* is the triumph of heaven, this is the power of God.[1]

1. 'The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.' Put side by side with this that other word of the Old Testament: 'All souls are mine,' or the utterance of the Hundredth Psalm rightly translated:—'It is he that hath made us, and to him we belong.' There is a right of ownership and possession inherent in the very relation of Creator and creature. The being made is wholly and altogether at the disposal, and is the property, of Him that makes him.

But is that enough for God's heart? Is that worth calling ownership at all? An arbitrary tyrant in an unconstitutional kingdom, or a slave-owner, may have the most absolute right of property over his subject or his slave; may have the right of the entire disposal of all his industry, of the profit of all his labours, may be able to do anything he likes with him, may have the power of life and death; but such ownership is only that of the husk and case of

[1] G. Matheson.

a man. The man himself may be free, and may smile at the claim of possession. They may *own* the body, but after that they have no more that they can do. That kind of authority and ownership, absolute and utter to the point of death, may satisfy a tyrant or a slave-driver: it does not satisfy the loving heart of God.

That being so, the next thought is that the special relationship of possession is constituted by mutual love. The only ways by which spiritual beings can possess each other are by love, by sympathy, by communion; and these must necessarily be mutual. We have a perfect right to apply the human analogy here; in fact we are bound to do it if we would rightly understand such words as those of the text; and it leads us to this: that the one thing whereby God reckons that He possesses a man at all is by His love falling upon that man's heart and soaking into it, and by the springing up in the man's heart of a corresponding affection. The men who welcome the Divine love that goes through the whole world, seeking such to worship it,' and who lovingly yield to the Divine will, and take it for their law—these are the men whom God regards as His portion and the lot of His inheritance. So 'God is mine,' 'I am God's,' are two sides of one truth; 'I possess Him' and 'I am possessed by Him' are but the statement of one fact expressed from two points of view. In the one case you look upon it from above, in the other case you look upon it from beneath. All the sweet commerce of mutual surrender and possession which makes the joy of our hearts in friendship and in domestic life we have the right to lift up into this loftier region, and find in it the best teaching of what makes the special bond of mutual possession between God and man.

What is it that I hunger for but God?
My God, my God! let me for once look on
Thee,
As though none else existed—We alone!
And as Creation crumbles, my soul's spark
Expands till I can say,—Even from myself,
I need Thee, and I feel Thee, and I love Thee!
I do not plead my rapture in Thy works
For love of Thee, nor that I feel as one
Who cannot die; but there is that in me
Which turns to Thee, which loves or which
should love.[1]

2. God owns men because God has given Himself to man. The Apostle puts it very strongly in the Epistle to Titus: 'The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us'—'that he might . . . purify unto himself a *people for his own possession.*'

Israel, according to one metaphor, was God's son, begotten by that great redeeming act of deliverance from the captivity of Egypt (Deut. xxxii. 6-19). According to another metaphor, Israel was God's bride, wooed and won for His own by that same act. Both figures point to the thought that in order to get man for His own God has to give Himself to man. The very height and sublimity of that truth is found in the Christian fact to which the Apostle points. We need not depart from human analogies here either. Christ gave Himself to us that He might get us for Himself. Absolute possession of others is possible only at the price of absolute surrender to them. No human heart ever gave itself away unless it was convinced that the giving was mutual.

On the lower levels of human experience the only thing that binds one man to another in utter submission is the conviction that that other has given himself in absolute sacrifice for him. A doctor goes into the wards of a hospital with his life in his hands, and because he does so he wins the respect, confidence, and affection of all that are there. You cannot buy a heart with anything less than a heart. In the barter of the world it is not skin for skin, but it is self for self. If you want to own me, you must give yourself altogether to me; and the measure in which teachers, and guides, and preachers, and philanthropists of all sorts make conquests of men is the measure in which they make themselves sacrifices for men.

All that is true, and is lifted to its superlative truth, in the great central fact of the

[1] Browning.

Christian faith. But there is more than human analogy here. Christ has not only given Himself to us, He has given Himself for us. And on that is builded, and on that alone has He a right to build, or have we a right to acknowledge, His claim of absolute authority over each of us.

¶ Jesus expected that His love would have a wider range than the fellowship of Galilee, and that the world would yield to its spell. It was not for St. John, His friend, Jesus laid down His life; it was for the Race into which He had been born and which He carried in His heart. No one has ever made such a sacrifice for Humanity. No one has dared to ask such a recompense. The eternal Son of God gave Himself without reserve, and anticipated that to all time men would give themselves for Him. He proposed to inspire His Race with a personal devotion, and that profound devotion was to be their salvation. 'Give me a cross whereon to die,' said Jesus, 'and I will make thereof a throne from which to rule the world.'[1]

3. The last thought is the issues to which the mutual possession points. God owns men, and is owned by them, in order that there may be a giving and a receiving of mutual services of love.

'The Lord's portion is his people.' That, in the Old Testament, is always laid as the foundation of certain obligations under which He has come, and which He will abundantly discharge. What is a great landlord expected to do to his estate? 'What ought I to have done to my vineyard?' the Divine Proprietor asks through the mouth of His servant the prophet. He ought to till it; He ought to fence it; He ought to cast a wall about it; He ought to reap the fruits. And He does all that for His inheritance. God's honour is concerned in His portion not being waste. So He will till it, He will plough it, He will pick out the weeds; and all the discipline of life will come to us; and the ploughshare will be driven deep into the heart that 'the peaceable fruit of righteousness' may spring up. He will fence His vineyard. Round about His inheritance His hand will be cast; within His people His spirit will dwell. No harm will come near them if their love is given to Him. 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye.' The Lord's portion is His people; and none shall pluck them out of His hand.

And on the other side, What do we owe to God, as belonging to Him? What does the vineyard owe the husbandman? Fruit. We are His, therefore we are bound to absolute submission. Life, circumstances, occupations, all; we hold them at His will. We have no more right of property in anything than a slave in the bad old days had in his cabin and patch of ground. They belonged to the master to whom he belonged. Let us recognize our stewardship and be glad to know ourselves His, and all events and things which we sometimes think ours to be His also.

We are His, therefore we owe absolute trust. The slave has at least this blessing in his lot, that he need have no anxieties. Nor need we. We belong to God, and He will take care of us. Our Owner will not leave us unheeded. Our well-being involves His good name. Leave anxious thought to masterless hearts which have to front the world with nobody to protect them. If you are God's you will be looked after.

We are His, therefore we are bound to live to His praise. That is the conclusion which one Old Testament passage draws. 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise' (Is. xliii. 21). The Apostle Peter quotes these words immediately after those from Exodus which describe Israel as 'a people for God's own possession'—'that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you.' Let us, then, live to His glory, and remember that they who know the sweetness of possessing God and the blessedness of yielding to His supreme control should tell what they have found of His goodness. Let not all the magnificent and wonderful expenditure of Divine longing and love be in vain. The Sun's flames, leaping leagues high in tongues of burning gas, must, they tell us, melt everything that is near them. Shall we keep our hearts sullen and cold before God's

[1] Ian Maclaren, *The Mind of the Master*.

re of love? Surely that superb and wonder-ul manifestation of the love of God in the Cross of Christ should melt into running rivers f gratitude all the ice of our hearts.

Thy life was given for me,
Thy blood, O Lord, was shed
That I might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead:
Thy life was given for me;
What have I given for Thee?

Long years were spent for me
In weariness and woe,
That through eternity
Thy glory I might know:
Long years were spent for me;
Have I spent one for Thee?

And Thou hast brought to me
Down from Thy home above
Salvation full and free,
Thy pardon and Thy love:
Great gifts Thou broughtest me;
What have I brought to Thee?

O let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent,
World-fetters all be riven,
And joy with suffering blent:
Thou gav'st Thyself for me;
I give myself to Thee.[1]

## Eagle Wings.

Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.—'As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him.'

Scripture abounds in metaphors setting forth the character and the work of Jehovah. But here is one of the most striking and suggestive of them all—an eagle, or, to give the true significance of the original, a great vulture, the monarch of the air, a magnificent bird, found especially around the precipitous gorges leading to the various parts of the Jordan valley. It is a bird noted for its superb strength, especially of beak and claw, for its wonderful keenness of vision, its remarkable power of rapid and unwearied flight, and its magnificent sweep of pinion. But the feature fastened on by Moses is not so much the eagle's terrible and fierce destructiveness as its beautiful and solicitous tenderness for its brood. That fierce beak, those piercing eyes, those powerful pinions strike no terror to the hearts of the fledglings, for to them they are the means by which their needs are satisfied and their safety from harm is assured.

1. Moses was looking back, near the close of life, upon the dealings of Jehovah with His chosen people, dealings not always easy to understand. A gleam of light came through the picture of the eagle and her nest. What if God were the great mother eagle of the race? Indeed, had not Jehovah said, 'Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.' It was God, then, who shook them out of their shelters in Egypt. It was the Lord who broke up the stagnation of their life. It was Jehovah who shattered their homes in Goshen, where they were content to remain in debasing slavery. It was God who forced them through the discipline of the wilderness, who sent them out into the venture of the desert, where their powers were awakened, where they were fitted for their place in history and prepared to step into the great scheme of redemption to which they were so vitally important in the purposes of God.

Here is uncovered one of the primitive and fundamental principles lying at the basis of all life—a principle that holds good not only in the training of eagles, but in the training of human life. The truth is simply this—that every human life, to come to its best and highest, to be fitted for and to reach the goal for which it was intended, will find its nest shattered, and must be prepared to confront those upheavals that break up its shelter and cast it out on the wide spaces of the new and the untried. We need not go beyond our own lives to know how prone we all are to settle down into the snug and complacent nest that our circumstances may afford, refusing to face the new and the unknown. Ah, then it is the part of God's wisdom and love to allow the

[1] Frances Ridley Havergal.

shattering of the nest, that in the consequent discipline our powers may be developed and our faith in Him increased.

Such a principle lies at the basis of all intellectual growth. Change is a prime condition of all apprehension and intelligence. The mind dies under stagnation. It expands only as it is compelled to venture into the hitherto unexplored. As James Martineau says: 'Dipped for ever in the same scene, plunged in the one colour, filled with one monotone, no perception would be startled into birth; the glance of attention sleeps till the moment of transition; it leaps out at the edges of light and darkness, of sound and silence, and in crossing the line first learns the realms on either side.' Much more is such an upheaval the condition of all moral and spiritual progress. The most earnest souls have welcomed the day when their nest was shattered, when they were pushed off their comfortable ledge to test their wings in the unknown spaces of life. You recall that prayer of Robert Louis Stevenson, which he calls *The Celestial Surgeon*, offered when he feared the loss of the keen appreciation of life's common joys:

If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain:—
Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake;
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose Thou, before that spirit die,
A piercing pain, a killing sin,
And to my dead heart run them in!

Often and often was that prayer answered in Stevenson's experience; not often through pleasure, but many times through pain. Every nest he feathered was shattered. He was constantly being driven off the ledge of life. He was ever testing his wings against the stormy gales: but think of the pinions he had, think of the vision he gained, think of the ranges he swept, and then ask if it was not an eternal kindness that hovered over him.

2. But there is the other aspect of God's dealings with His people, namely, that of sheltering them under His wings, as the mother bird shelters her brood in the hour of storm and danger. 'In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.' There are some of us who know what it is to be *on* God's wings when He takes us in flight, when He inspires us with courage and teaches us to use our wings. There are others of us who have come to that experience when, after all the flying, after all the doing, all the enduring, we are weary at heart, and we seek shelter *under* His wings, just as the eagle after her flight with her little ones takes them back into her shelter, and in effect says, 'You are tired now. I will put the wings which have borne you when wearied in flight all round you to protect you against both the storm and the foe.' Ah! then the little ones will not even hear the storm without. They have felt the hard side of the wing; they feel the soft, warm feathery side of it now. The Psalmist knows what it is to have been on the wing of God, borne upon the storm so that he might learn how to fly; but now he thanks God that when he has become weary of the storm, because it is too much for his strength, he is taken back into the nest, under the warmth and shelter of that wing which formerly had sustained him.

The mother eagle wrecks the nest
To make her fledglings fly,
But watches each, with wings outstretched
And fierce maternal eye;
And swoops if any fail to soar,
And lands them on the crag once more.

So God at times breaks up our nest,
Lest, sunk in slothful ease,
Our souls' wings moult and lose the zest
For battle with the breeze;
But ever waits, with arms of love,
To bear our souls all ills above.[1]

[1] John Oxenham.

## The Small Rain.

Deut. xxxii. 2.—'My doctrine shall drop as the rain, . . . as the small rain upon the tender herb.'

Have you ever noticed in Nature God's wonderful care for young and tender things? You know the elm tree. It has a rough, coarse leaf; and if you take one of its leaves and fold it over, you will find that the two sides are not even. The one half has a bit at the foot that overlaps the corresponding part of the other half. Now, why is this curious irregularity? It is a proof of God's care for the tender herb. There is a young bud formed beneath each elm leaf, from which the leaves of the following season are to come; and this bud is so delicate that it would be scorched and injured by the summer sun were it not that it is overshadowed by this irregular part of the leaf. Hidden and protected under the overlapping part of the elm-leaf, it waits to ripen and prepare itself for next year's growth.

Have you ever examined the inside of a bean-pod? How wonderfully it is lined throughout with a delicate white down, in which the young beans lie snugly imbedded until they grow big and ripen, and are able to stand the summer heat. Each tender little bean nestles in its woolly pocket, like a precious jewel in one of those satin-lined cases which the jeweller gives you to protect it. Do you know that the word 'cosy'—the pet name by which you call anything that is very comfortable and snug—is derived from the old French name for the inside lining of a bean-pod? How expressive it is! How cosy does God make the little bean!

The text tells us that God makes the rain small to water the tender herb. This is all the more striking when we remember that rain in the warm Eastern climate is usually very violent. It comes at rare intervals, and when it does come it falls in great splashing drops, in sheets and in smoking torrents, as if the clouds had burst and poured out all their watery contents at once! The streams are swollen, the ground is ploughed up, and every green thing is beaten to the ground. That is the usual character of the winter rain in an Eastern land. But in Palestine, in summer and autumn, when for months together there is no rain and the sky is blue and cloudless, there is a peculiar provision made for the vegetation, which would otherwise perish under the scorching sun and the withering drought. The west winds come from the Mediterranean Sea laden with vapour, and they distil it over the land in the form of small rain, not falling from the sky in drops, but condensing out of the air and close to the ground like a kind of Scotch mist. It assumes in this way the right form to water and refresh the tender herbs, to nourish the summer crops, and fill the grape and the olive and the fig with their precious juices. It is to this peculiar small rain, to which the name 'dew' is often given in Scripture, that Moses alludes in his grand prophetic song.

1. God's doctrine, as the great lawgiver of the Jews tells us, distils or flows out in a soft and gentle manner, so as not to frighten or harm the person who receives it, just as the very fine particles of moisture are deposited by the fleecy night clouds upon the tender young plants. We think of God's doctrine as something profound and mysterious; of God's speech as something too high for us to understand. Where the word of a king is, there is power; and the Psalmist tells us that the voice of the Almighty breaks the cedars of Lebanon. We think that if the Lord speaks to us it must be in a mighty voice that will make us fear and tremble. We think of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai that burned with fire, accompanied with darkness and tempest and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more; and so terrible was the sight that Moses himself said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.' And yet the text tells us that God's word comes not like a violent downpour of tropical rain, accompanied with crashing noise of thunder and blaze of lightning, but like the crystal drops of the dew, formed without a sound in the quietness of the night.

How significant is that little word 'distil'! It speaks of gentleness and peace. There is

no dew or small rain on a stormy night. If the waves are lashing on the shore and the clouds scurrying across the sky, the rain that falls is equally stormy, and beats down upon one with merciless force. No doubt there are times when God speaks in the rushing of Pentecostal wind and flame, when He comes down as through rent heavens, and His enemies tremble before Him. But such Divine speaking, such coming of God, is very exceptional. He loves quiet things best, for judgment is His strange work. Think of the wonderful scene on Horeb, when the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire passed before Elijah, and God was not in these terrible sights and sounds but in the still small voice that came after. Both that assurance and the one in the text come to us, not from the pages of the Gospels, which speak of the love of Jesus, but from the pages of the Old Testament, which exhibit God as a Lawgiver and Judge, and present to us the sterner aspects of His character.

2. We must prepare our hearts to receive God's doctrine, else it will be in vain that God makes it like the small rain upon the tender herb. When God means to refresh the parched earth after a long drought, He first of all prepares the languid, half-withered fields to receive the showers. He covers the blazing sun with dark clouds which shadow the fields; He brings out the invisible vapour in the air, and sends a soft moist wind to cool down the surface of the blistered leaves, and to soften their hard dry fibres, that they may drink in the needed supply. Then when all is ready the clouds pour down the rain that is stored up in them, at first slowly and gently, and then faster and more copiously till the fields are drenched with the refreshing baptism. And we need to be prepared in a similar way to receive the blessing which God is waiting and willing to bestow upon us.

¶ Before the huge rock that hemmed the passage between Long Island and New York was blasted, between nine and ten years had been spent in charging it. When all was ready a little girl of eleven years old pressed a button and caused the explosion. No doubt there has often been a long preparation in the spiritual world and some word or action of ours brings about an effect which seems miraculous.[1]

3. And how near to us is the small rain of God's doctrine! It does not come from the far heights of heaven. It comes like the dew out of the air that is just above the surface of the earth. We are surrounded with an atmosphere of grace, which holds God's precious doctrine in readiness to drop down upon us when we are prepared to receive it. The word is nigh unto us. We have only to believe, and it is in our mouth and in our heart.

¶ These words brought into my heart what I had been seeking so many years; or rather they made me discover what was there, which I did not enjoy for want of knowing it. Oh, my Lord! thou wast in my heart, and demanded only the turning of my mind inward, to make me feel thy presence. Oh, infinite Goodness! thou wast so near, and I ran hither and thither seeking thee, and yet found thee not. My life was a burden to me, and my happiness was within myself. I was poor in the midst of riches, and ready to perish with hunger near a table plentifully spread and a continual feast. Oh Beauty, ancient and new! Why have I known thee so late? Alas, I sought thee where thou wast not, and did not seek thee where thou wast![2]

## The Sweetness and the Power of Religion.

Deut. xxxii. 13.—'He made him to suck honey out of the rock.'

In one of his books, entitled *The Uttermost Star*, Mr. F. W. Boreham tells the story of Marjorie, who was ninety-two, 'though you would never suspect it.'

'Ah, yes,' she replied with a smile, when I made some reference to the remarkable length of her pilgrimage, 'I was only a girl when I entered into the sweetness of religion.' The phrase, illumined by that bright though sightless smile, and interpreted by accents so full of feeling, fastened upon my memory at once.

[1] *Life and Remains of the Rev. R. H. Quick*, 100.
[2] *Life of Madame Guyon*, 36.

*'The sweetness of religion.'* 'I was only a girl when I entered into *the sweetness of religion!*' And then she went on to tell me of the rapture of her first faith. Seventy-five years earlier, religion had come into her life like a great burst of song. Amidst the sunshine of an English summer-time, whilst the fields were redolent of clover and of new-mown hay, her girlish soul had sought and found the Saviour. Instantly the whole world had stood transfigured. Her tongue seemed to catch fire as she told me of the radiant experiences of those never-to-be-forgotten days. I saw, as I listened, that the soul has a rhetoric of its own, an eloquence with which no acquired oratory can compare. She told of the joy that she found in her own secret communion with the Lord, sometimes in the quietude of her little room—the room with the projecting lattice window from which she loved to watch the mists rising from the hollow as the sun came up over the hills; sometimes down among the alders along the banks of the stream, sitting so still that the rabbits would scurry up and down the green banks without taking the slightest notice of her; sometimes in long, delicious rambles across the open park, rambles in which she was only disturbed by the swish of a frightened pheasant or the tramp of fallow deer; and sometimes amidst the leafy seclusion of the primrosed woods. And often, at sunset, when Dapple and Brownie had been milked, and the tea things put away, she would take her knitting and saunter down the dusty old road. And as, one by one, the stars peeped out, and the nightingale called from the woods in the valley, and glow-worms shone in the grass under the hedge, and a bat flapped and fluttered in its queer flight round her head, it seemed as though the miracle of Emmaus were repeated, and Jesus came and walked with her.

She spoke of the wonders that, under such conditions, broke upon her spirit like a light from heaven. Her Bible became a new book to her; and an unspeakable glory fell upon the village sanctuary, the dearest spot on earth to her in those days of long ago. A wave of happy recollection swept over her as she told of the walks along the lanes and across the fields, in the company of a group of kindred spirits, to attend those simple but memorable services. The path led through a tossing sea of harebells and cowslips; the lane was redolent of hawthorn and sweet-brier. As they made their way to the church that peeped shyly through the foliage of the clump of elms on the hill, the solemn monotone of its insistent bell mingled with the chatter of the finches in the hedges and the blither note of the lark high up in the blue. Marjorie's blind eyes almost shone as she recalled and, with glowing tongue, recounted, all these precious and beautiful memories. 'I was only a girl,' she said, 'when I entered into the sweetness of religion!'

'But,' I interjected, 'you speak of the sweetness of religion as though it were a thing of long ago. Do you mean that it became exhausted? Did that happy phase of your Christian experience fade away?'

A cloud passed over her face like the shadow that, on a summer's afternoon, will sometimes float over the corn.

'Oh, well, you know,' she replied, after a thoughtful pause, 'the tone of one's life changes with the years. I left my girlhood behind me. I married; children came to our home in quick succession; life became a battle rather than a frolic; and sometimes the struggle was almost grim. Then troubles fell thick and fast upon me. In one dreadful week I buried two of my boys, one on the Tuesday and the other on the Friday. Then, last of all, my husband, the soul of my soul, the best man I have ever known, was snatched rudely from my side.'

Marjorie hid her face for a moment in her hands. At last my impatience compelled me to break the silence.

'And do you mean,' I inquired, 'do you mean that, under the stress of all this sorrow, you lost *the sweetness of religion?*'

'Well,' she replied thoughtfully, 'under such conditions you would scarcely speak of *sweetness.* I would rather say that, during those sterner years, I entered into *the power of religion.*'

A ring, almost of triumph, came into her voice.

'Yes,' she said, 'in those years I entered into *the power of religion.* Only once did my

faith really stagger. It was on the night of that second funeral—that second funeral within a single week! I was kneeling in my own room on the spot on which I had knelt, morning and evening, through all the years. But I could not pray. I felt that God had failed and forsaken me. My shrine was empty, and I burst into tears. And then, all at once, a Hand seemed laid gently upon my shoulder and a Voice sounded in my ear. "Am I a man that I should lie?" it said. I was startled. I felt chastened and rebuked. I had treated Him as though He were no wiser than I, and as though He had broken His word. Then, through my tears, I prayed as I had never been able to pray before. A great peace soothed my broken spirit. I was ashamed of my distrust. It was the only time my faith had wavered. No; I should not speak of *sweetness* as I recall those years of bitter sorrow and sore struggle. In those days I entered into *the power of religion!*'

'But now look, Marjorie,' I pleaded, 'you tell me that, as a girl, you entered into *the sweetness of religion,* and that, in the graver years that followed, you entered into *the power of religion.* But your girlhood and your struggle have both passed now, and here you are in this quiet little cottage looking back across the intervening years at those far-away periods. Would you say that you now enjoy the *sweetness* or the *power?*

Her face shone; it was almost seraphic. Her whole being became suddenly animated and luminous. She reached out her hands towards me as though she held something in each of them.

'*I have them both!*' she cried in a perfect transport of delight. '*I have them both!* The *sweetness* that I knew in my English girlhood has come back to me in the days of my old age; and the *power* that came to me in the years of trial and loss has never since forsaken me. I have them both; oh, bless His holy Name, *I have them both!*'

It was too much for her. Overcome by the rush of recollection and the tempest of exultant emotion, she sank back in her chair and lapsed into silence.

'Why, Marjorie,' I said, 'you have given me the very thing I wanted. As I walked along the road I was wondering what I should preach about on Sunday. But I know now. I shall preach on those words from the swan-song of Moses in which the old leader, in laying down his charge, bears grateful witness to God's goodness to Israel. 'He made him,'' he says, 'to suck *honey out of the rock.*' I was reading in a book of travel only yesterday that in the Orient the wild bees store their honey in the crevices among the cliffs, and on a hot day you may see it trickling down the face of the granite in shining streams of sweetness! As a girl, you say, you entered into *the sweetness of religion.* As a girl, girl-like, you gave little thought to the rock itelf, but you loved to taste the sweetness of the honey. You entered into *the sweetness of religion!* But, as a woman, in the turmoil and tussle of life, buffeted and storm-beaten, you forgot the honey that oozed from the cracks and fissures, and were glad to feel the massive strength of the rock itself beneath your feet. You entered into *the power of religion!* And now, the fury of the storm all overpast, you tell me that you still rest upon the great rock, rejoicing in its firmness; and, as in your earlier days, you once more enjoy the honey that exudes from its recesses. You enjoy both the strength and the sweetness; *you have them both!* I shall certainly preach on that text on Sunday!'[1]

## The Admissions of the Enemy.

Deut. xxxii. 31.—'For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.'

By '*our* Rock' Moses means the living God in whom the saints trust: He is the impregnable strength of His people. Amid the weariness of life He is the rest of their soul, and in Him they find sweet delight. By '*their* rock' Moses means the idols, the religious systems, the worldly things, the lying vanities in which the natural man places his hope. In the fourth verse of this chapter the great lawgiver declares that our Rock is the better: 'He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Uttermost Star,* 42ff.

iniquity, just and right is he.' But in the text Moses daringly constitutes his enemies judges in the controversy, and declares that they award the verdict to Israel.

Much the same is true to-day. The outside world in many ways concedes the superiority of the Christian hope. The verdict given in our favour by worldly and unbelieving men is not always verbal and direct; it is often unintentional and unconscious, implied and indirect. Yet such concessions have a real and great value—in some respects they are more significant than direct and verbal testimonies.

1. The sceptical world makes *intellectual* concessions to our creed. Notice one of these admissions, and a very striking and significant admission it is: we confess the superiority of what we imitate; to copy a thing is to recognize its excellence.

No one, for example, can study that most wonderful modern system of secularism known as Postivism without being struck by its close resemblance to the Christian doctrine, worship, and hope. In Nature there is a phenomenon known as 'mimicry.' One class of insects or birds acquires the characteristics of another class, and by subtle modifications these imitative creatures come closely to resemble those with which they have no affinity. But it is always the weaker and inferior creature that apes the stronger and higher; the superior never simulates the inferior. So it is usually with imitation in all directions—the feeble and inferior copy the characteristics of the powerful and splendid. After infidelity has scoffed at religion for ages it discovers two things: first, that the race cannot do without a religion; and, secondly, that that religion is the most likely to meet the case which most closely copies the truths of revelation, and the great features of the Church of God.

From another section of the world of unbelief comes a most sincere and pathetic testimony to the need and blessedness of a spiritual faith. Listen to Mr. J. A. Symonds: 'No one is happy who has not a deep, firm faith in some ideal far beyond this world, in some law of majesty, beauty, goodness, harmony, superior to the apparent meanness, ugliness, evil discord of the present dispensation. How difficult it is to live the life of the spirit thoroughly, to be permanently interested in the eternal things, the durable relations. This is why so many of us are not happy. I have a great deal of faith in my soul, vague, not reduced to a creed. But what I have sustains me in the obscuration of my energies. To this I owe my happy moments—to the support I draw from nature, books, and art—the imperishable thoughts of men, the everlasting mysteries and glories of the world—finally, from that, whatever that is, which underlies all this, and is the real reality, the truth and unity of the whole. Those who are not "tenoned and mortised" upon something indestructible must be rendered wretched by the changefulness and barrenness of daily life. . . . It is wonderful that we are at all contented with the transitory interests and trivial occupations which fill up the inexorable years —each year leading us, at so short a distance, to the bourne of death, and after death, if anything, then either endless change or continuity of eternal being. In either case the soul needs a refuge from the things that pass like a show, to some reality above them and beneath them. This I feel with all the force I have. The all but mortal blow which prostrated me three years ago has taught me so much. The misery of scepticism, of intellectual doubt, of wordliness, of mental indolence and moral inactivity, consists in this—that men have to suffer cares, ill-health, ennui, and often the greater evils of life, without a calming prospect, without any hope that the wrong will be made right, the broken pieces joined into a perfect whole hereafter. . . . If the world is to live without faith and to become conscious of the vanity of things—that is, if men take to thinking seriously upon the facts of this life without a religious trust in God—a simultaneous suicide might almost be expected.' What is this but the plaint of Job, 'Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!' Is not this the cry of the sorrowful father, 'I believe; help thou mine unbelief'? At any rate it is an eloquent repudiation of scepticism by a sceptic; it is a

candid and touching acknowledgment of the necessity and infinite satisfaction of a spiritual faith, such a faith as that which we exercise in God and in His Son Jesus Christ.

2. Unbelief makes many *practical* concessions to our creed. We note a few of these, although, in fact, they are being made continually.

(1) Such an acknowledgment of the preciousness of our faith comes from the *domestic circle,* in the unwillingness of unbelievers to make sceptics of their families. Men do their best for their families. It is pathetic to see the sacrifices and sufferings that a noble man will endure on behalf of his wife and children. He is in haste to give them the best that he has, and to do for them the best that he knows. But, as a grand rule, the sceptic shrinks from disturbing the religious faith of his wife, sister, or child. If the Christian faith were the false and evil thing that scepticism assumes, the sceptic ought to exert himself night and day to deliver his loved ones from such a superstition; yet he cannot bring himself to do anything of the sort; he is unable to suppress the feeling that it would be unmanly, unjust, and cruel to spoil their dreams and hopes, to rob them of the consolations and strength of their faith. Herein the sceptic betrays distrust of his rock. A pathetic and tremendous struggle is going on in the heart of many a sceptical parent. His blundering logic denies the doctrine of God, he has lost faith in the Divine government and renounced the great hope of immortality; but, whilst his false logic discredits Christian doctrine, his better instinct is still with it, he feels in a vague yet powerful way its truth and beauty, and he hesitates to impart to his family the dark and painful speculations which perplex his own intellect. His brain is against spiritual doctrine; his heart, however, is for it, and his family gets the benefit of the heart's casting vote. Being evil, he knows how to give good gifts unto his children. 'Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.'

(2) Such an acknowledgment comes from the *business world.* By literary circles scepticism may be considered a virtue, but it is not accepted as such in the practical world, even by irreligious men.

We do not for a moment mean to affirm that men of business seek their servants directly from religious circles, or confide in them because they make a religious profession; to do this masters would lay themselves open to the wiles of the dissembler and hypocrite. The great question in business is character, that a man be steady, industrious, true, and trustworthy; the measure of a servant's cleverness is often an essential consideration, but his moral character is a matter that can rarely be neglected.

We do not hesitate to say that thousands of masters who themselves give little attention to religion nevertheless pay it real homage in their appreciation of the moral qualities of their dependants. Often they may not be aware of the fact, but it is none the less significant for all that. The Old Testament contains striking instances of devout servants occupying honourable positions in pagan households, and history repeats itself in modern times. The verdict of the practical world is with the Christian faith. 'Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.'

¶ I saw once an advertisement for a clerk: 'Freethinker preferred.' I do not know what kind of business was transacted in that office, or what came of the advertisement, but how strangely it sounded! I saw it only *once*—significant fact! We need not hesitate to affirm that such an application would be badly received in almost every quarter of the practical world. On paper men justify or excuse atheism and the free views of property, marriage, and conduct which usually go with freethinking, but they are extraordinarily shy of atheism realised in flesh and blood in actual life.[1]

(3) Such an acknowledgment comes from the *political sphere.* The validity of religion is denied in theory, but the very men who deny its truth and authority confess that politically it is useful, nay, indispensable—they agree to regard it as a useful and necessary superstition. Gibbon, arch-infidel as he was, attacking

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Bane and the Antidote,* 218.

the Christian religion with learning, eloquence, and satire, yet went to church, because he confessed that government and order would be impossible unless the common people were awed by the supernatural. Gibbon the statesman attending church is the best answer to the infidel historian. He who wrote the history of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* ought to have known what empires need to give them stability and permanence, and by significant action he confessed that to build on scepticism is to build a house upon the sand. When a later rationalist, like Edmond About, said, 'What France needs is ten millions of Protestants,' he gave utterance to the same conviction—that a spiritual faith is essential to order, civilization, and progress. Many able unbelievers of late years have looked with the deepest misgiving on the spread of infidel opinion—they believed that the negative doctrine was correct, yet that socially and politically it was perilous. To discredit religious faith was to loosen the bands of order and government. To use the words of François Coppée: 'We see a favourable omen in the evident uneasiness of the enemies of God, who seem now themselves frightened by the consequences of their baneful work.'

## The Disappointments of Life.

Deut. xxxii. 52.—'Thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I gave the children of Israel.'

THERE is something beautiful as well as massive about the character of Moses. He had but poor stuff to deal with, as most pioneer leaders find to their cost when initiating great movements. Again and again—so we are told in the Biblical narrative—God offered to abandon Israel and make Moses himself the progenitor of a new nation which should be worthier to inherit the Divine promise: but the noble-hearted leader invariably put the thought away. 'And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?' 'Furthermore the Lord spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people.' 'If thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written.' One can almost see the grand, lonely soul thus engaged in colloquy with himself and with the Divine voice of which he felt so sure in his own inner experience. It is truly magnificent. Here is a man of culture and refinement, learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, giving himself utterly and completely to the task of lifting and saving the people of his own blood, and finding it almost impossible. Yet he believes he has been called to do it, that it is his work, and—that somehow, despite all discouragements, God will crown his efforts with success. Year after year he labours through a long and toilsome life, amid much opposition, treachery, and constant ingratitude, knowing all the isolation of the man who lives above his fellows. So far as we can gather, he had no intimate friend, no human counsellor on whom to rely, nothing but his inward conviction that he was the chosen of God for the particular task to which he had put his hand. He lived in a continual communion with the unseen presence which at Horeb had summoned him to his destiny.

And what does he get for it in the end? He might have stood high in Egypt, which was then the centre of the civilized world; all he has received in exchange has been the leadership of a wandering horde of emancipated slaves still subject to the usual vices of servitude. He is a man of vision; he has no one to share it, no one who fully understands what he is aiming to do. He has put his whole soul into the task; no one realizes how enormous is the sacrifice involved. And now, as he stands looking from Pisgah's top over the shining and fertile land of Canaan, in which he had formerly hoped his work would reach its culmination, he finds that death is compelling him to resign it to other hands. In the aged leader's farewell to his task there is something inexpressibly sublime. To tell the truth, there is something grander about that death on Pisgah than there would have been had Moses lived to see the full fruition of his aims. He died alone; died as he had lived, thinking of his people, not of him-

self, resigning himself and them into the hands of God, blessing and praying for them as he looked down upon their future home. He wanted no one to come and mourn over his tomb; Israel must not linger there, but must pass on to the new inheritance; he had done his part, he could do no more; but stern work had still to be done, and God would find the man to do it. So died the great lawgiver, none knew where; he did not mean them to know.

And had he not high honour—
The hillside for a pall,
To lie in state while angels wait
With stars for tapers tall,
And the dark rock pines, like tossing plumes
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave.

O lonely grave in Moab's land!
O dark Beth-Peor's hill!
Speak to these curious hearts of ours,
And teach them to be still.
God hath his mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell;
He hides them deep, like the hidden sleep
Of him he loved so well.

1. In the moral grandeur of the self-abnegation of Moses, as set forth in this closing scene, there is something which is rare indeed in human character, but of which the world stands in sore need, something which might be of great comfort and help to people who, like this great servant of God, have a task committed to them for which they will never receive any personal reward in this world. It is a commonplace of human wisdom that the greatest benefactors of the race, the greatest epoch-makers, are persons whose work does not receive true recognition while it is being done, and, more often than not, is visited with reprobation, contempt, or neglect. We all say so, though we never seem to learn from it. But is not this equally true of the experience of individuals who have no claim to be epoch-makers, whose tasks are not executed on any grand scale, and who are never even important enough to attract public censure or disturb the security of any vested interest whatsoever? It is perfectly possible for the vision of Moses on Pisgah to be that of many a humble servant of God in this or any other day. A man labours all his life to get a certain thing done; he does not succeed, but he manages to prepare the way for someone else who does succeed; then perhaps the beneficiaries begin to praise the pioneer and heap compliments upon his memory, but he is not there to hear them; he saw the promised land from afar, but died ere he entered it. Many a reformer perished before Luther was born, many a patriot lived and wrought for Italy before Garibaldi appeared. There must be times in the life of every God-inspired man or woman when he or she wonders whether the work is worth doing for the heedless world, just as Moses must have wondered, when he listened to his murmuring followers in the wilderness day by day and realized how different were their ideals from his own. And how many people can climb in solitude to Pisgah's top, and take a glad farewell of a triumph which is rightfully theirs, but the actual accomplishment of which will fall to others? It takes a big soul to do it, and there are not many big souls in the world so far. He was a smaller man who conquered Canaan than the man who led the people there, worthy though both may have been.

2. What have you been going through? Did you think when you chose your course years ago that you were perfectly free from all selfish thought, that you cared only for the sacredness of the service that had to be rendered, that you were prepared to give up everything for it? And what are you finding now? Perhaps, after all, you are weaker than you had supposed. The thrill of enthusiasm did not last long. You have encountered unexpected difficulties and have had to deal with many sordid realities. Those you have sought to benefit have never even known that they owed you anything; perhaps the world in which you move would laugh to scorn the suggestion that there is such a thing as disinterestedness of aim or that you are an example of it; in fact, you could not declare it; to do so would

e to cross the invisible line between the umble servant of God and the self-righteous Pharisee. But then, God's dealings with you ave been strange, too. You felt sure you were eing led in a certain direction, and that the lessing would come. Where is it? One disppointment has followed another, trouble has een piled upon trouble; things are so very ifferent from what you hoped and dreamed hat at times you wonder whether you saw rue in your hour of inspiration, and the only hing of which you can be sure is that whether ou were the man to do your particular work r not, someone ought to do it. That is all ou can see, and so you keep pegging away vithout seeing much fruit of your labour. Like Savonarola, you can only say when the dark our comes that the light you saw, and by vhich you steered your course, was the true ight, or you thought it was; it was the best ou knew.

3. How do you feel about it? Well, you vould not be human if your heart were not a ittle sore. It does seem hard. God's dealings re infinitely mysterious: it is not in this vorld that we must look for the full explanaion of them. What we think we are doing or Him, and what we think we are going to ffect by it or gain from it, is not what He hinks. Moses thought the establishment of srael in Canaan was an end in itself. It was ot; there was something greater to come, and e knows better now. His work was to create he *soul* of Israel, not its body. He did not now that he was preparing the advent of the greatest spiritual revelation that has ever ome to mankind. Jesus could have been born f no other nation than Israel, and it was Moses who made Israel. When his task was inished God said to him, 'Come up higher and ee what it is.' When he stood with Jesus n the Mount of Transfiguration ages after, he vas only entering into the fullness of his own vork as he did not see it even from Pisgah.

Though every nerve be strained
To fine accomplishment,
Full oft the life falls spent
Before the prize is gained.
And, in our discontent
At waste so evident,
In doubt and vast discouragement
We wonder what is meant.
But, tracing back, we find
A Power that held the ways—
A Mighty Hand, a Master Mind,
That all the troubled course defined,
And overruled the days.[1]

## Law and Love.

Deut. xxxiii. 2, 3.—'From his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people.'

At the first glance it might seem as if the text involved a contradiction—'a fiery law: yea, he loved the people'; but in fact there is no contradiction; the text expresses one of the very greatest truths touching our human life.

1. In the first place, we must look for an illustration of the text in *the physical sphere*. 'He sent forth a fiery law': that doesn't belong to the Christian Church only; that law prevails through this great physical world that science seeks to interpret. The world is stern, savage, inexorable. 'Yea, he loved the people.' We learn that the severity of the world is constructive and not destructive, that the severity is benign and not malignant, that the severity of the world is the perfecting of the world and not its marring and its destruction.

Look where you will there is a struggle going on, an endless battle between one insect and another, between plant and plant, between bird and bird; the whole earth is a great theatre of conflict and strain and stress, of sweat and sorrow. And yet it is this very antagonism, this endless conflict of one creature with another, of one race with another, that has lifted the organic world out of the mud, and filled it with all the splendid flowers and birds and trees and creatures that we see to-day, creatures capable of sustaining life and capable of enjoying it. Some people think when they come into the Church of God that it is only there we talk of the severity of the world, but the text speaks the truth of Nature —that everywhere under our eye there goes on

[1] John Oxenham.

a profound and bitter struggle. Yet the severity of the world preserves its harmony and life and beauty and felicity.

2. Once more, the text finds its illustration in *civilization*. God holds the world of men together by severity. When we look into the history of the world we find that society has not been fashioned in some mild and grandmotherly method. God has not perfected civilization, as we know it, by penalties which are light in themselves and lightly relaxed. God never coddles an individual, and He never pampers a nation; that does not belong to the Divine method and programme. All human life is a struggle, and it is through that struggle that God is ever bringing the world of men to a greater perfection, and power, and felicity.

The fisherman thinks so as he toils upon the sea; the mariner feels what a struggle life is when driven with wind and wave; the forester, as he fells the tree, the miner, as he brings up the coal, the herdsman, as he toils in the sun, the labourers on every side, and the students and all workers feel what a difficult thing it is to live. Yes, but with every struggle we put off a little more of the old barbarism. We have to fight, as it were, with the angel, but at last he blesses us with knowledge, freedom, energy, mastery of natural forces, hope; we get up from the struggle princes of God.

¶ It is not easy to be good and do right. One must contend earnestly. No victory was ever won without a battle. We are not to be dismayed when the war hymn begins and our marching orders send us straight into the thick of conflict . . . We would like to win without struggle, but life does not come that way.

Life is ever the output of pain. Greatness is the product of discipline. 'The trial of your faith is precious.' Dickens, in one of his novels, has an amusing character who was never so happy as when having a hard time. When things were easy and conditions comfortable, he grew despondent and was greatly depressed; but when circumstances were desperate and difficulties piled up before him thick and apparently insurmountable, he became incarnate optimism and was as happy as an angel. The novelist has caricatured one of the profoundest truths of life. Difficulty is a real stair. The frosts of winter are necessary to spring. It is in the fire that metal gets its character.

It is better to battle than to dwindle. God wants us to be, rather than to have. He wants us to acquire fortitude and heroism and consecration, and we do so through struggle. This is the song of battle.[1]

3. And, lastly, the text finds its illustration in *human character and life*. For remember that the Ten Commandments are only ten definitions of the eternal love. The Commandments of Sinai: there you have love defined, but love profound, unmixed, and everlasting. Oh, but, you say, I like a larger freedom. Do you? You will never get that larger freedom of which you talk, and which you call freedom, without penalty. If you only open your eyes and look about you, you see on every side the results of the 'fatal pleasure of unbounded individual liberty,' that is, of a man putting his caprice in the place of God's wisdom. Oh, you say, but as soon as ever we come into the temple it is the everlasting thing about righteousness, law, duty, retribution. Yes, there is no way to perfect us but that way. You say, I don't like it, don't like preaching, because there is so much strait-lacing. Strait-lacing! I noticed a musician the other day with a harp, and there was a good deal of strait-lacing there, for he had stretched the strings nearly to the breaking, and it was only then he got out of them their finest music. And what is human nature when all the cords are relaxed in self-indulgence? There is only confusion, there is only dissonance. It is only when God's law has stretched the chords of our straining being nigh to the breaking, it is only then that He gets out of us the sweet music of perfection. And so when you come into the temple, and you find Sinai overtopping everything, and, when you want to hear things of indulgence and pleasure, you only hear of limitation, responsibility, and retribution, remember that as the fiery law makes the

[1] J. I. Vance, *Tendency*, 203.

planet and the civilization so the fiery law makes the large character and brings into our life supreme satisfaction.[1]

But love is the beginning and the end of all. The word rendered 'love' is eloquent, both in its literal meaning and in its form. It is employed only in this place, but has cognates in allied languages, which mean *the bosom* and *a tender embrace,* and so it suggests the picture of the Divine Lover folding 'the people' to His heart, as a mother might fold her child. The participial form is used here, implying that the act spoken of is continuous. That tender love is timeless, lifted above the distinctions of tenses, such as past, present, or future, having no beginning and therefore no end, no growth and therefore no decay.

Further, mark the place in this great song where the text comes in. It is laid as the beginning of everything. 'We love him because he first loved us' was the height to which the last of the Apostles attained in the last of his writings. But this singer, with the mists of antiquity round him, who knew nothing about the Cross, nothing about the historical Christ, who had only that which modern thinkers tell us is a revelation of a wrathful God, somehow or other rose to the height of the evangelical conception of God's love as the foundation of the very existence of a people who are His. Like an orchid growing on a block of dry wood and putting forth a gorgeous bloom, he, with so much less to feed his faith than we have, has yet borne this fair flower of deep and devout insight into the secret of things and the heart of God. 'He loved the people'—therefore He formed them for Himself; therefore He brought them out of bondage; therefore He came down in flashing fire on Sinai and made known His will, which to know and do is life. All belongs to the tender, timeless love of God.

## God and His Saints.

Deut. xxxiii. 3.—'Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand; and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.'

WHOEVER was the author of this great song, he has, by dint of Divine inspiration and his sympathy with the inmost spirit of the Old Covenant, anticipated some of the deepest thoughts of the New Covenant in the words which form the text. His invocations of blessing on the tribes have for their foundation the revelation of God on Sinai. He begins with the fact with which the national existence began and, on the basis of that, outlines in these words the elements of the relation between God and His 'saints.'

1. *In the heart of God.*—'Yea, he loved the people,' that is, they have a place in His heart. Spoken originally of the tribes of Israel, it is at least as true of us to-day. There was nothing in them above other peoples to call forth His special love. There is a striking passage earlier in the book: 'The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all peoples: but because——.' Who would guess what follows that 'because,' if they do not happen to remember? What does it say? 'Because *the Lord loveth you*' (Deut. vii. 7, 8). That is all there is to be said. The Lord loved them because He loved them. Grand, glorious, unexplainable, sovereign act of His, and therefore a fact in our experience.

They were a wayward and wilful people. Yet the Lord loved them; they had a special place in the heart of God. The fact is solemnly affirmed and emphasized: '*Yea,* He loved the people.' We do not readily and naturally love those who are continually seeking to wrong us. We do not easily believe that those whom we wrong can really love us, and we are too apt to measure the Lord by human standards. So slow are people to believe that God loves them that it is made emphatic by an assertion having the force almost of an oath: 'Yea.' Even then it is not fully accepted. Have not children been heard to say, 'Mother loves me when I am good; but she does not love me when I am bad'? No true mother endorses that statement. No! If there is a child who causes her special anxiety, her love seems all the more to go out after him, and, however far he may wander, she loves him all the time. Use imagination with a

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

wider sweep, and think you see gathered into one great heart the love of all the mother-hearts in the whole world. How large and loving a heart that would be!—large and loving and warm beyond all imagination. But even that heart would be comparatively a little heart and a cold heart when put side by side with the infinitely large and loving heart of God.

2. *In the hand of God.*—From that root of all things springs guardian care of all who answer His love by theirs. The singer goes on, mixing up his pronouns in the usual fashion of Hebrew poetry, 'All his saints are in thy hand.'

(1) That means two things. It means absolute security, for will He not close His fingers over His palm to keep the soul that has laid itself there? And 'no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' No one but ourselves can do that. And we can do it if we cease to respond to His love, and so cease to be saints. Then we shall fall out of His hand, and how far we shall fall God only knows.

(2) Being in God's hand means also submission. Loyola said to his army of followers, 'Be like a stick in a man's hand.' That meant utter submission and abnegation of self, the willingness to be put anywhere, and used anyhow, and done anything with. And if I by my reception of, and response to, that timeless love am a saint belonging to God, then not only shall I be secure, but I must be submissive. 'All his saints are in thy hand.' Do not try to get out of it; be content to be guided as the steersman's hand turns the spokes of the wheel and directs the ship.

¶ When recovering from his attempted assassination, Laurence Oliphant wrote to his mother: 'My only thought that night was for you: for myself I am glad; it made me know I could face death, which at one time seemed inevitable. I found my creed or philosophy quite satisfactory. I take everything as in the day's work, and that is why in one sense I do not feel thankful like others. I have such a profound feeling of being in God's hands, and having nothing to do with my own fate, that gratitude even would be presumption. If killed, I have no doubt my first feeling in the other world would be one of relief; just as my first feeling at not being killed was one of relief too. It seems to me to make no difference: whatever is, is best; and I feel I could realize this amid considerable pain. Since wounded do not wish to complain; acquiescence during short stay here no great heroism. I do not know that I should say so always; but as yet I can, and I see it is the right thing.'[1]

3. *At the feet of God.*—'They sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.' The picture sets before us a group of docile scholars, listening with open ears to the Teacher. But another rendering seems more probable, namely, 'they follow at thy feet'; then the picture is of the saints following, as sheep their shepherd, the God whom they love. Religion is imitation of God. That was a deep thought for such a stage of revelation, and it in part anticipates Christ's tender words: 'He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice.' They 'follow at His feet.' It is the blessedness and the power of Christian morality that it keeps close at Christ's heels. Instead of saying to us, 'Go,' Christ says, 'Come,' and instead of bidding us hew out for ourselves a path of duty, He says to us, 'He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

'They receive his words.' Yes, if we keep close to Him He will turn round and speak to us. If we are near enough to Him to catch His whisper He will not leave us without guidance. It is one side of the thought that, following, we receive what He says, whereas they that are away far behind Him scarcely know what His will is, and never catch the low whisper which will come to us by providences, through the exercise of our own faculties of judgment and common-sense, if only we keep near to Him. A glance tells two who are in sympathy what each wishes, and Jesus Christ will speak to us if we keep close in His steps

We have no hopes if Thou art close beside us,
And no profane despairs,

[1] *Laurence Oliphant*, 155.

Since all we need is Thy great hand to guide us,
Thy heart to take our cares;
For us is no to-day, to-night, to-morrow,
No past time nor to be,
We have no joy but Thee, there is no sorrow,
No life to live but Thee.

The cross, like pilgrim-warriors, we follow,
Led by our eastern star;
The wild crane greets us, and the wandering swallow
Bound southward for Shinar;
All night that single star shines bright above us;
We go with weary feet,
But in the end we know are they who love us,
Whose pure embrace is sweet.

Most sweet of all, when dark the way and moonless,
To feel a touch, a breath,
And know our weary spirits are not tuneless,
Our unseen goal not Death;
To know that Thou, in all Thy old sweet fashion,
Art near us to sustain!
We praise Thee, Lord, by all Thy tears and passion,
By all Thy cross and pain!

For when this night of toil and tears is over,
Across the hills of spice,
Thyself wilt meet us, glowing like a lover
Before Love's Paradise;
There are the saints, with palms and hymns and roses,
And better still than all,
The long, long day of bliss that never closes,
Thy marriage festival![1]

## Moonlight Fruit.

Deut. xxxiii. 14.—'The precious things put forth by the moon.'

THERE is a psalm rich in experience and fragrant with grace which says, 'The moon shall not smite thee by night.' But this man who had passed through the wilderness can say more than that. Even as he goes down into the valley of the last shadow it is illumined for him not only by the light of many suns and steadfast stars, by whose shining he had taken bearings for his pilgrim company across the desert, but it is also lit by the suffusion of mellow moonbeams. If he has found in life that there are 'precious fruits brought forth by the sun,' he has learned also that there are 'precious things of the growth of the moons'; and for these, not less than for those others, he stirs up his soul, in one last song, to bless the Lord.

In this dying man's song of thankful remembrance there is suggestive differentiation in the choice of language between 'things of the fruits of the sun' and 'things thrust forth by the moons,' as if there were a natural ease and inevitability about the springing up of the fruits of the brighter orb, whereas there is labour of pain and patience about those blessings which have ripened in the night-time. These are creatures of slower, more gradual growth. Many moons have gone to their making, unlike those other fruits which seem to have yielded to the kiss of the sun in one long summer day. We all surrender naturally to geniality and kindliness, save those whose hearts are smitten with blight. Light and warmth bring forth the best in us, as spontaneously as the balmy sunshine brings forth the hidden beauty of the earth. But there is a colder, ghostlier light which sometimes does what the sunshine was powerless to effect.

I was summoned lately to come with haste and watch the Night-Blooming Cereus burst into flower. It is a plant as uninviting as a cactus, and with as little promise of beauty about its prickly and forbidding stem. But eyes of wonder watch to see this unpromising plant unfold a marvellous wax-flower, opening its graceful petals in a burst of rare beauty which will have passed before morning. And those who behold this secret of the night admire it with much exclamation and rejoicing. For the night which hides one sun brings out many stars; and the darkness which shuts up most flowers brings out a few, but those few are most rare and wonderful. That which the sunshine of the brightest day has failed to

[1] Edmund Gosse.

reveal becomes a precious thing put forth by the moon.

The experience of the man who could say such a true thing as this, and say it so exquisitely, must have been that of most of us in one form or another.

1. For example, who has not experienced it *intellectually?* A problem has baffled you for the greater part of the working day. You have turned on it the most brilliant sunlight of your mind; but it has brought forth nothing in the way of solution. You lie down in bewilderment, unenlightened. And how often does it come to pass that 'He giveth unto his beloved in sleep,' so that, either our brain is clearer when we wake and the problem does not seem quite as hopeless as it did overnight, or else the subconscious self has been at work, so that by the morning you discover with pleasant surprise that precious things have been put forth by the moon, which all the application of the most brilliant light of intellect had failed to elicit during the day.

Or it may be that the light of knowledge blinds us just because it is so dazzling. We cannot understand a thing at first hand. But let it come to us filtered through the mind of another, and how comprehensible it immediately becomes. The borrowed light serves us better than the more direct beam. There are precious fruits brought forth by the intellectual suns shining in their brilliance: but the lesser lights have a power just as real, although exerted in a quieter way.

2. The truth is still more striking *in the region of the emotions.* There is a love that is hot and fierce, and, especially where there is no deepness of earth, it brings forth at once an eager response. But when the noontide passion has spent its force, and the vehement flame of the high sun has died, the light of a whole world does not die with the setting sun. There are precious things put forth by the moon, not so brilliant, perhaps, not so highly coloured or so heavily scented, but mellower and serener. There is love and understanding and sympathy that is the gift of long years and much experience; and though it has not the dazzle of youth, or its glamour, it is gracious, and softer, and more abiding. And the heart that was beginning to think that it had been cheated out of life's dearest prize turns with uplifted face to the Giver of all, with a benison for the precious things put forth by the moon when the day seemed dead.

> The moon doth with delight
> Look round her when the heavens are bare;

and the very serenity of her regard is due to the passing of other and fiercer lights and more clamorous noises. When you have exchanged your Swinburne for your Wordsworth it means that you are beginning to discover the precious things which are only the growth of mellow moons. The stream of life may be flowing less boisterously, but it is also less turgid and muddy, and a fitter mirror for the stars.

3. And, forasmuch as the chief end of man is just the knowledge of Him who is altogether Love, there are precious things put forth by the moon for us *in our spiritual experience* also. There are some who, because of a cloud of sin, or a mist of tears, or a mountain of unbelief, cannot obtain for themselves one immediate and direct glimpse of the Sun of Righteousness. But Almighty Love is not therefore at the end of His resources. He has not only made the greater light to rule the day; He has a lesser light for the comfort and guidance of the night. Over and over again one comes across those who cannot make a direct approach for themselves to spiritual truth and understanding. They have neither the eagle wing nor the eagle eye, and cannot look straight at the sun. The glory of God who can bear? but we see it in the face of Jesus Christ.

And what God Almighty does through His Son, He is ever doing through the ministry of those who hold their faces sunward. These moons of God not only catch the heavenly radiance for themselves, but they reflect something of its glory for others who, seeing them, dwell not altogether in unlightened darkness.

> Through such souls alone,
> God stooping shows sufficient of His light
> For us i' the dark to rise by.

There are those who can make for themselves the immediate, mystical approach to God, and theirs are the precious things of the fruits of the sun. But for many among us Divine truth has to be mediated. If such lives are to be redeemed from darkness at all, they must have a reflected light. And it is a dark, dark night when there is no moon. When will the moon be up? the belated travellers ask. When will the moon be up? There are many more than you think who are living their lives by the light of your faith and mine. Moonlight is a poor substitute for sunlight, but it is all that some will have to light them home. When will the moon be up?[1]

## Strength Sufficient.

(NEW YEAR).

Deut. xxxiii. 25.—'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'

Who does not feel that these familiar words have a vitality and freshness altogether their own, and a wealth of inspiration independent of the man who first uttered them, and of the historic people who first heard them; independent, too, of their place in this fresh edition of the Law of God for Israel, and of their rank in this farewell benediction to the tribes? They are as *living* as if they were spoken to us individually by the voice of God this morning; and we feel as sure of their truth as if we had seen them flaming in letters of gold on the sky while we gazed on the dawning of this New Year. Only a line out of an old Hebrew poem, they are as English and as human as if we had met them in yesterday's newspaper, or had heard them in the swift and confiding interchange of loving and sympathetic hearts. Brief as a proverb, they are as full of meaning as the Bible is of God. Old as the everlasting hills, they refresh us like the breath of a spring morning.

1. Notice carefully, however, how the promise runs. Not as our life is, not as our years are, not even as our weeks are, but as our days, so shall our strength be. For each day as it comes, God's promise is that strength will be given us, but just for a day at a time. The way to live under any circumstances is just a day at a time. Leave to-morrow with God until it comes. That is what the Word of God lays upon us as a duty. Let us live this day at our best and bravest, trusting that God's help will not fail us. And for the duties and trials of to-morrow, however hard and heavy, believe that strength for that day also will be given us, when it comes.

¶ In one of R. D. Blackmore's fine open-air stories, there is a character who talks at length about horses. After comparing good ones and bad ones in their behaviour the first time they breast a hill with a load behind them, he sums the matter up thus: 'Howsoever good a horse may be, he longeth to see over the top of the hill before he be half-way up it.' The man who is listening to him confesses that he has often felt that way himself! And I do not know that there are many of us who can claim to be guiltless in this respect. Yet it is perfectly plain that the men and women who are living the bravest and most successful lives around us, and are proving towers of strength to others, are those who have learned the art of living just a day at a time, and of depending upon God for strength for that day in the simplest and most trustful fashion.[1]

2. This is not to question the regality of forethought. It is just in his power to rise above to-day that man rises above the beasts that perish. It is only the fool who is reckless of to-morrow, as if to-morrow were never going to come. To-morrow has an awkward way of coming, though the heart be drugged with opiates to-night. But prudent and prayerful forethought is one thing, and dull foreboding quite another; and it is against the latter that, in our highest interests, the Word of God warns us. Forethought always dignifies to-day, giving it a place in an abiding purpose. But foreboding always spoils to-day, robbing it of its present joy and power. It sees the heavy clouds in the far distance, and is so intent on gazing at them that it misses

[1] H. L. Simpson, *Put Forth by the Moon*, 66ff.

[1] A. Alexander.

the gleam of sunshine on the grass, and the music of the birds among the trees. It is an easy thing to number our years. Our years are seventy or eighty at the longest. But when the Psalmist prays for heavenly direction, he turns his thought to the numbering of his *days*. And to number by the day is to make the day the unit, and to leave to-morrow in the hands of God, who has never yet failed nor forsaken us, and who sees the end from the beginning.

¶ Among those who were present to wish God-speed to Dr. Robert Laws as he left this country to found Livingstonia was Captain Wilson, a gallant Christian sailor who had, while engaged on the East Coast in the suppression of the slave trade, been associated with Dr. Livingstone and Dr. Stewart. He gave the Doctor much useful advice. 'One of the best things you can do,' he said, 'is to learn to think ahead. In my career I have found that there is a great difference between one man and another, and that the man who gets on is the man who thinks and looks ahead.'[1]

¶ Like Livingstone, we pillow our heads on the old saying: Leave to-morrow's trouble to to-morrow's strength; to-morrow's work to to-morrow's time; to-morrow's trial to to-morrow's grace—and to-morrow's God.[2]

3. But the thought of the text is not chiefly of the length of time for which God's supply of strength shall last. Rather is it the assurance that for every day and every hour and every moment His strength shall be available for our weakness. Some one reminds us that our hymnology bears witness to the growth and progress we make in truth. Some few years ago it was the customary thing to sing on the Sabbath day, 'Safely through another week,' and men fondly but vainly imagined they could then get a week's supply of grace sufficient for their Christian lives. A little later E. R. Wilberforce gave us the hymn 'Just for to-day,' and we went from day to day receiving strength in day's supplies. Then someone gave us the chorus, 'Every day and hour,' adding the deeper truth of our constant need of God's holy presence, and the hymn, 'I need Thee every hour,' appeared; and we sang that as if we had touched the depth of Christian experience. But at last we were led to sing 'Moment by moment,' and reached the depths of the truth of living as in the presence of God.

[1] W. P. Livingstone, *Laws of Livingstonia*, 46.
[2] Dan Crawford, *Back to the Long Grass*, 195.

## The Men of Mighty Days.

**Deut. xxxiii. 25.—'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'**

Walt Whitman has a great word in his eulogy of General Grant. He describes him as 'a man of mighty days, and equal to the days.' The word is just a transcript of the Divine promise. We are always purposed by our God to be more than a match for the largest circumstances, more than level with the vastest opportunity, more than adequate to the most exacting task. Mighty days are therefore days of royal privilege because they are days of promised power and endowment. 'Bliss was it in that day to be alive, but to be young was very heaven!' The day of convulsion is the day of our Lord. The fearfully unfamiliar task is a strange door into a new inheritance. Our impossible marks the very hour of grace.

In the 'mighty days' we can unlock the mighty power of God. The background of every day is grace, and the more tremendous the day the more abounding is the grace. And therefore we can interpret our difficulties as the index of our resources. Our mission betokens our capital in the bank, and we can draw upon 'the unsearchable riches' to the last demand of our need. 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'

Then with God's mighty grace we can unlock ourselves. If life were just a sunny picnic that was never broken up by fierce tempest, by thunder and lightning and pelting rain, the greater part of our human resources would remain unused and concealed. It is in the mighty days that we discover ourselves. Latent gifts troop out of their graves. Buried seeds spring into vigorous life. We never thought we had it in us. The big struggle becomes not only our revealer, but also our

unearther, and we put on strength and majesty like a robe.[1]

¶ Difficulties are the stones out of which all God's houses are built.[2]

## The Everlasting Arms.

Deut. xxxiii. 27.—'Underneath are the everlasting arms.'

Moses arrives at this sublime position after a survey of the national life—if, indeed, this nomadic existence of the Israelites deserved the title national—the national life of the children of Abraham. And when all is said, it was the life of humanity in miniature. Israel was a pocket edition of mankind. If you could read the meaning of these human documents, you could read the meaning of human life. All the problems were here that you find anywhere. The Hebrew was great on Providence; but the history of any people has equally abundant arguments for Providence. None can say that Moses did not serve an honest apprenticeship to his craft—the craft of leading men, and legislating for them. To lead *men* you must know *man*, and certainly no one can pretend that Moses saw man only at his best, and drew in consequence too optimistic a conclusion. Again and again life must have looked to him the merest tangle of threads. Order, purpose, system, plan—how little there seemed to be! And then he looks down into this life of humanity, glossing no errors, evading no difficulties; and he asks himself the question 'What is underneath?'

Who that has seen anything and thought anything of the great social problem has not been haunted by the same question? Think of the age-long tragedy of the poor; think of the unequal conditions of life; think what miseries ignorance and sin entail upon the people; think what a thing this seething, simmering life of man is—a vapour, says one—a dream, says another—vanity and vexation, says a third. We have tried to learn and tried to think about it; we have perhaps seen the best-laid schemes of men and angels thwarted and defeated by the incurable follies and blunders and blindness of the multitude. And we have heard grey-headed men who once were young with hope adopting the language of despair or even revolution. What a mess it seems! How the garment of humanity that should be without seam is rent and torn with hideous class distinctions, and divisions wide as the gulf that will separate Dives and Lazarus in the future state. There is nothing new in this. It is just human nature, as we say. And some add, as it was in the beginning, so it is and ever shall be. Moses knew it; Homer looked at it with wise, wide eyes; Socrates brooded over it, and Buddha. And in all lands, under all skies, there are the same distinctive features. What of this human life? Is it the topmost surf on the ocean of being? And even if so, what is there underneath? It is Moses' question. It was Christ's. It is ours.

1. Let us take the first step towards the full answer. Let us state it clearly; not Moses' full declaration, but so far as we can go at first towards his declaration. 'Underneath is the everlasting' . . . That is something. And it is not only true, but it is *demonstrably true*. Underneath there is the everlasting. There is no real dispute about this, for it is the great contribution of science to the sum of modern belief. Underneath changing form there is unchanging law. Underneath the transitory and mutable surface of things there are everlasting principles, and the visible does not determine the invisible; the invisible it is that determines the visible. Underneath there is the everlasting. You, man, you are one of the greatest authors of change among the visible forces of the universe. You cannot handle anything without changing it. You set your machinery in motion, and the very rocks are dissolved at your touch. Nothing is too hard for you to pierce, nothing is too fierce for you to tame. But when you have done your utmost, what is it after all? You have changed *things*, but you cannot change *laws*. In your career you are brought up as against a wall of adamant by the everlasting. You can resist the law of gravitation, but nothing that you can do will ever alter it. You may withstand all the principles that operate within this

[1] J. H. Jowett.
[2] F. W. Faber.

sphere of Nature, but you cannot eradicate and destroy them. Change all the physical conditions of the world about you, and the same laws will return and take up their home in the universe you have created. Only the outward, the superficial, is capable of change. There is no fact so certain to science or theology as this that underneath there is the everlasting.

2. And there many will call on us to halt and rest content, and be as thankful as we can. There is Law, everlasting Law. Thus far can we go but no farther. Now it is quite true that the next step is out of philosophy into religion. But there is no contradiction between the two, as is sometimes falsely suggested. Mark that. Religion accepts all that philosophy has to teach, and insists upon it with equal intensity and earnestness. But she has a great last word to say when philosophy can only sit with dumb lips. 'Underneath,' she says, 'are the everlasting arms.' That means Personality. That means an all-enfolding, all-embracing love. That means power, the power of the right arm of the Most High. That means redemption, an arm that is not shortened that it cannot save; not 'shortened' by any material limitations or physical obstacles. It is not shortened that it cannot save. It can reach down through all defects of being, through all taints of blood, through all grossness of the flesh, through all warpings of the will, and corruptions of the mind and heart; it can get within, to the mysterious soul and core of all character, the springs of all conduct —underneath there are the everlasting arms.

¶ In civil life he had always said his prayers. They had done him good, too, in a way. They had been a sort of squaring of his accounts morally. He had tried to see where he had failed, made resolutions to amend, and acknowledged, to himself at any rate, that he had failed. He had remembered his relations and friends before God, and it had helped him to do his duty by them. At the same time, he was not in the least degree a mystic. Even in his prayers he had never felt the reality of God. 'God' to him was rather the name for the principle of goodness than a Being of infinite power and intimate importance. His greatest religious 'experience' had been a spasmodic loyalty to the Christ-man, stimulating him at rare intervals to sudden acts of quixotism.

When he first enlisted he continued the habit of saying his prayers, more because it was inconvenient than for any other reason, perhaps. The other fellows in the barrack-room did not say their prayers, and he was too English not to feel the more resolved to say his. He was not going to be afraid. So he said them, deliberately and very self-consciously, half expecting to be laughed at. It was very difficult. He could not concentrate his mind. He whispered the words mechanically, his head full of other thoughts. The other fellows paused in their talk the first night, and then went on as if nothing had happened. After that no notice was taken at all. No one followed his example. No one commented, or interfered with him. A little persecution would have hardened his resolve. Being ignored weakened it. He could not bring his mind to bear on his words, and there seemed no point in going on. He tried saying them in bed, in the privacy of his blanket. Then one day he forgot; and after that he omitted to say them ever.

After all, it made very little difference. And yet at times he felt that there was a difference. It was a little like a man sitting in a room with a frosted window that only opened at the top. He understood that it gave on to a garden; but he had never seen the garden. He used to sit with the top of the window pulled open, and then somehow one day he was busy and forgot to open it, and after that he never bothered. It made so little difference. At times he did notice that the air was a little less fresh; but he was too lazy or too busy about other things to bother.

This Englishman's religion had always been a bit like that, like a window opening on to the unknown and unexplored. He had never climbed up and looked out. He liked to think that his window gave on to a garden, and to think that he sometimes caught the scent of the flowers. But he had never had the energy or faith to test his belief. Suppose he were

to find that, after all, his garden was only a paved yard! Anyhow, he had left the window shut now. At times he regretted it; but a kind of inertia possessed him, and he did not do anything about it.

When he first got to the front he prayed, half ashamed. He was not quite sure of himself, and he prayed that he might not be found wanting. But when it came to the point, everything was very prosaic. It was boring, and uncomfortable, and at times terrifying. Yet he felt no inclination to shirk. He just drifted on, doing his bit like the others, and with not too good a grace. He was asked to take the stripe, and refused. It meant more trouble and responsibility. His conscience told him that he was shirking. He grew angry with it. 'Well,' he demanded of it, 'why have I responsibilities more than any one else? Haven't I failed?' He put the question defiantly, ostensibly to his conscience, but with an eye to the 'Christ-man,' in Whom he had almost ceased to believe. To his astonishment, he got an answer. It was a contingency with which he had not reckoned. Like a flash this sentence wrote itself across his mind: 'Strengthen my brethren.' It staggered him. He felt that he knew what it meant. 'Don't whine about failure. If you are willing to serve, here is your job, and the sign of your forgiveness: Strengthen my brethren.' He took the stripe after all, and fathered the boys of his section.

The final stage came later. There had been a charge, a hopeless affair from the start, undertaken in broad daylight. He had fallen between the lines, and had seen the battered remnant of his company retire past him to their own trench before a hail of bullets. He lay in the long grass between the lines, unable to move, and with an unceasing throbbing pain in his left leg and arm. A whizz-bang had caught him in both places. All the afternoon he lay still, his mind obsessed by one thought: Would any one find him when it was dark, or would he be left to die? He kept on wondering the same thing, with maddening persistence. At last he must have lost consciousness, for he woke to find that the sun had set, and that all was still but for an occasional flare or a random shot. He had lost a lot of blood; but the throbbing had ceased, and if he kept still he felt no pain. He just lay there, feeling strangely peaceful. Above him he could see the stars, and the moon, though low in the heavens, gave a clear light.

He found himself vaguely wondering about the meaning of everything. Somehow the stars made it all seem so small and petty. All this bloodshed—what was the good of it? It was all so ephemeral, so trivial, so meaningless in the presence of eternity and infinity. It was just a strife of pygmies. He suddenly felt terribly small and lonely, and he was so very, very weak. He was cut off from his fellowmen as surely as if he had been on a desert island, and he felt somehow as if he had got out of his element, and was launched, a tiny pygmy soul, on the sea of immensity, where he could find no bearings. Eternity and infinity were so pitiless and uncomprehending. The stars gazed at him imperturbably. There was no sympathy there, but only cold, unseeing tolerance. Yet, after all, he had the advantage of them. For all his pygmy ineffectiveness, he was of finer stuff than they. At least, he could feel—suffer. He had only to try to move to verify that. At least, he was aware of his own existence, and could even gauge his own insignificance. There was that in him which was not in them, unless . . . unless it was in everything. 'God!' he whispered softly. 'God everywhere!' Then into his tired brain came a new phrase: 'Underneath are the everlasting arms.' He sighed contentedly, as a tired child, and the phrase went on repeating itself in his brain in a kind of chant: 'Underneath are the everlasting arms.'

The moon went down behind the horizon, and it was dark. They fetched him in at last. He will never again be sound of limb; but there is in his memory and in his heart that which may make him a staunch fighter in other fields. He has learnt a new way of prayer, and the courage that is born of faith well founded.[1]

[1] Donald Hankey, *A Student in Arms*, i. 150ff.

## An Unrealized Vision.

Deut. xxxiv. 4.—'I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.'

Moses' work was done. The command came to him. 'Get thee up into this mountain . . . and die.' What a contrast to a former Divine summons to ascend Sinai to commune with Jehovah and to receive from Him comfort, strength, and a renewed commission of service! And yet Moses evinces none of the trembling awe with which he ascended Sinai. Without remonstrance, without hesitancy, save for a moment, he calmly obeys the stern injunction. A good man knows how to die. Not in the thick darkness and the weird lightnings of his former privileged communion with God (which might seem more congruous for the obsequies of such a prophet), but in the bright sunlight and calm clear atmosphere, with the promised land spread before him like a map, he prepares to die.

He was an old man, but his eye was not dim, neither was his natural strength abated. As he climbed the lower slopes, the dusty desert lost its grimness in a mystic haze, and he steadily plodded upward until he stood on the top of Pisgah. Here before him, in wonderful outline, lay the land of his dreams and desires. Far to the north he could see the snowy summits of Lebanon and Hermon; to the south of Esdraelon, and flanked by the twin domes of Gerizim and Ebal shimmered the lake of Galilee; to the far south was the Dead Sea—grim reminder of retributive justice; at his feet lay the deep tropical trench of the Jordan valley, with the walled city of Jericho guarding its western slope; while directly in front rose the great central range, in one of whose wind-grieved gashes he could descry the white walls of the hill fortress of Jebus, future city of God.

1. As the eye of Moses ranged over the far-stretching distance he must have thought of the struggles that awaited his undisciplined tribes. What match were they for the fortresses, the walled cities, 'the chariots of iron'—all the resources of an established civilization? And he could foresee a harder struggle still. The wandering shepherds of the desert would have to learn to till the soil—a change of habit and occupation which would bring with it a subtle change in ways of thinking. He who had borne so long with their rebellions in the wilderness knew how quickly they would fall to the level of Canaanite religion and Canaanite standards of life: they would be mingled with the heathen, and learn their works. Is there any sorrow like the sorrow of him, who, with a disinterested and lofty aim at heart, knows that his cause is doomed to be thwarted and betrayed by the very people for whose welfare he has spent his life? Yet it was not to raise despair, but rather to bring hope and consolation, that the vision was vouchsafed to Moses. As he gazed over the scene in which his race was to work out their chequered story he was filled, we may be sure, with a steadfast confidence. For he had sown the seed which in time would bear its fruit. He had made known to his people that Jehovah was their God, the one and only God for them; the God to whom they were bound by the most solemn ties; whose Name and nature had been revealed as supremely righteous, requiring righteousness of His worshippers; 'full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth; . . . that will by no means clear the guilty.' With a faith like this, the foundation of all true religion, the tribes could face the conflicts, the hardships, the temptations, that lay before them. They would conquer and possess the land of promise; the sovereign purpose of Jehovah held good; He had sworn unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, 'I will give it unto thy seed.'

2. And what were his thoughts of himself? Life lay behind him, and he could see all of it, the grave and the gay, the purposes of good and evil, the uselessness of sighing and crying, of fighting and striving. He had a complete chart of it, but his knowledge came too late:

> There's the life lying,
> And I see all of it,
> Only I'm dying.

He felt the burden of an incommunicable wisdom. After all, wisdom was just a catalogue of useless regrets, a thing which by no magic could be imparted to others. And there was an even more disturbing feeling: this vision of the Land of Promise was his reward. His reward? Ah, how bitter that was! To be permitted to look upon what he had toiled for, and suffered for; to see it in its attractiveness and charm, all the while knowing that it was not for him, that he had come to it too late—that was indeed a bitter thought.

Such a moment comes to most of us. There is a time with all of us, if we live long enough, when we must go into a lonely mountain and gaze upon a land of promise—and realize that it is not to be ours. A clear realization that much of what we have desired and laboured for, and believed that we deserved to have, is never to be ours is inseparable from any prolonged existence on this planet. That is why a vein of melancholy runs through the happiest life. It is not only present in old age, but makes itself felt in maturity, and sometimes even adds a sombre tinge to the long, long thoughts of youth.

¶ In the life of Cardinal Newman we read how he had set his heart on establishing an Oratory at Oxford. Contributions came in freely, and the establishment was spoken of as an assured prospect. His biographer writes: At last, then, after the three years of suspense, after all the ups and downs of the struggle, the pain caused by the opposition of old friends, the greater pain given by the charges against his loyalty as a Catholic, all seemed to promise well. The one position in which he felt he could, in the years that remained to him, do a real work for the Church seemed assured to him. He thought he saw God's Will clearly. If any fresh enterprise was at his age anxious and hard, to support him in this he had the conviction that it was to him a most suitable task and was assigned him by lawful authority. The clinging affection he ever preserved for Oxford, moreover, must make it a labour of love. . . .

Although the formal permission—so he was told—had come from Rome, the old Oxford priest, Mr. Comberbach, whose place the Oratorians were to take, seemed to be unaccountably slow in moving, and put the newcomers off with excuse after excuse. But this was regarded at the Oratory as only a rather tiresome eccentricity. Newman, impatient to make his plans, sent Father William Neville on March 21 to ascertain definitely the date of Mr. Comberbach's departure, and he at last announced that he should be gone soon after Easter. Neville was to go to Oxford again on Saturday, April 6—the eve of Passion Sunday. In the morning he packed his portmanteau, and then, in company with Newman, went for a long-remembered walk on the Highfield Road, past St. George's Church. The memory of it was handed on by Father Neville to the present writer, in more than one conversation. Newman, sunshine on his face, talked of the prospect. 'Earlier failures do not matter now,' he said; 'I see that I have been reserved by God for this. There are signs of a religious reaction in Oxford against the Liberalism and indifferentism of ten years ago. It is evidently a moment when a strong and persuasive assertion of Christian and Catholic principles will be invaluable. Such men as Mark Pattison may conceivably be won over. Although I am not young, I feel as full of life and thought as ever I did. It may prove to be the inauguration of a second Oxford Movement.' . . . Thus happily talking they returned to the Oratory. The servant, who opened the door to admit them, at once gave Newman a long blue envelope, and said: 'Canon Estcourt has called from the Bishop's house and asked me to be sure to give you this immediately on your return.' Newman opened and read the letter, and turned to William Neville: 'All is over. I am not allowed to go.' No word more was spoken. The Father covered his face with his hands, and left his friend, who went to his room and unpacked his portmanteau.[1]

3. But in the last sight that we have of the great leader, his look is not backward, but forward. He knows well how much the future holds of trial and call to effort, yet faces it with a confidence grounded on belief in God's

[1] W. Ward, *Life of Cardinal Newman*, ii. 137ff.

nature, God's presence, God's invincible purpose. We take leave of him standing on the threshold of a new age in the attitude of a prophet, with a vision open before his eyes and a burning faith in his heart.

And this is the right attitude for Christian men and women. We are summoned to look forward, not backward. God forbid that we should be unmindful of His mercies in the past! The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night have guided us thus far on our course; we have been disciplined and taught, but with the aim of equipping us for a higher achievement, that we may enter an inheritance which can be won only by a spiritual conquest.

¶ At the centre of Khartoum stands a simple, noble statue of General Gordon. The hero of the East Sudan is represented sitting on a dromedary's back, looking out across the vast dark realms of inner Africa. 'Ought not the figure to have faced the city?' a traveller asked a guide. 'No, sir,' replied the native; 'they set him looking, not toward the palace where he lived, nor towards the Nile, by which he might have escaped, but towards the Sudan, for which he died. He is waiting, sir, for morning to dawn across the Sudan.'[1]

## Life's Incompleteness.

Deut. xxxiv. 4.—'I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.'

Down in the heart of every human being who reaches to the larger efforts of life and comes to the full measure of what life means, there always lies buried some unknown tragedy. We may never know it. It may be so entirely concealed that no one ever suspects it, but in some form or other—in some failure or disappointment, in some sin or fall—it is there. The happiest lives do not escape this experience. And the universality of it is manifest to us in the fact that nearly all the greatest lives have this tragic element clearly revealed. The deep sympathy and admiration which men feel for these lives is not because of the sense of their superiority or the lonely exaltation of genius, but because of the consciousness that in them is seen that which each man knows in some degree—the sadness and the disappointment of life.

The character of Moses exercised a peculiar charm over the Hebrew people. They thought him great and felt how much they owed to him; but there was more in the power with which he swayed them than merely the influence of a great legislative mind that organized a national history out of the rude chaotic elements of their tribal life. There was the greatness and pathos of a nature that was filled with lofty purposes and great visions and yet had failed, or seemed to have failed, to attain any of the things it had aimed at. The one great purpose of his life which had won him to itself long, long ago when he was a young man; which had driven him into the wilderness and then had sent him back to Egypt to lead the people out; which had sustained him through all those weary years in the desert and had not failed him as age crept over him was not realized. The land he had longed for lay before him, transfigured in the glory of the Syrian sun—mountains and hills, valleys and plains, verdant pastures and green watercourses, home-like villages nestling in the mountain side and rich cities filling up the fertile plain. For him there was but one long look at this fair vision, and then death. All the long years ended only in this. Yet, in a way, this very imperfection suggested something still in the future, and as the glory of the promised land faded from Moses' eyes, another vision rose of a better land and a better life with Him who had sent him on the long toil of all these years.

1. In a way that is painful to each of us, there is a sense, and a very deep sense, of incompleteness about life. When a man says, 'I am entirely satisfied, I have won all that I fought for, I am contented with what I am and pleased with what I do'—can anything means less than such language or such an attitude? And yet there are many so-called followers of Christ who find it easy to let all ambition to be like Him sink out of sight. They rest content in the low valleys of their small attainments. Life may not be large to

[1] Lady Simpson, *Hitherto: Henceforth*, 19.

them, but in a way it is complete. It is one of the great and fundamental differences between a great life and a small life that where we are impressed with the little completeness of the small life we are more deeply impressed with the great incompleteness of the great life. We are sure that whatever else it is it is not satisfied with itself. It may stand on some supreme elevation of life and character that we shall never attain, but if it does, it sees far away into another life, a land of promise, a land of vision where the years are not long enough to permit it to go.

¶ In Carlyle's 'Journal,' under date May 8th, 1844, we find this entry:—'My progress in "Cromwell" is frightful. I am no day absolutely idle, but the confusions that lie in my way require far more fire of energy than I can muster on most days, and I sit not so much working as painfully looking on work. . . . My chief motive now is a more and more burning desire to have done with it. *Eheu, cheu!* I am very weak in health, too. I am oftenest very sad. The figure of Age, of grey-haired weakness, twilight, and the inevitable night never came on me so forcibly as this year. Age is sad, yet it is noble after a sort; the advance of it upon one is a peculiar tragedy, new for every new life. Words are weak in general to express what I feel. Thou art verily growing old, and thou hast never been young; and thy life has amounted to this poor paltriness, and, etc., etc., etc. There is no wisdom in writing such thoughts, or even in more than partially entertaining them. The Future alone belongs to us. Let us doubly and trebly struggle to profit by *that*—turn *that* to double and treble account. Oh heavens! get on with thy "Cromwell."'[1]

2. It is, in a way, quite impossible for any man to achieve that ideal which still rises before him no matter how much he has attained. It is not a mere speculation and a dream, this sturdy defiance of the present conditions of life. Time says to us, 'You cannot be this, there is no year and no place where you can come to that which you think of'; and the soul replies, 'It is still the best, that which is within, and I care not for your days and years, I know only that the best has nothing to do with them. It is hard to justify such deep instincts, but the strong feeling of the incompleteness of life seems to assure us that there is real ground for them in a completeness that stretches out beyond life. If there were no completeness sometime there would be no sense of incompleteness now. The perfection which the mind craves has its reality vouchsafed to it in the fact that it knows that what it now has is imperfect. The ignorance which spurs us on testifies to the knowledge that lies beyond. If there were no knowledge greater than that which we possess we could not possibly feel that we were ignorant. If there were no spiritual strength or greatness larger than what we have, we could not possibly be dissatisfied or discouraged with what we now possess. When we reach the top of the mountain we rest content, for the limit has been attained. Our discontent and upward striving are the assurance that above us there are yet heights calling us to climb.

¶ It is by struggle that life is broadened, and the human spirit freed from many of its limitations; and there is nothing nobler in man than that constant dissatisfaction with his condition which provokes the struggle. The race is always reaching forward to grasp better things than it yet possesses. It is haunted by visions of perfection, and driven on by aspirations and dreams which will not suffer it to rest in any present achievement. This discontent is not a superficial restlessness; it is the evidence of the infinite possibilities of man's nature, and of his inability to stop short of complete development.[1]

I know Thee One
Incapable of mocking man or bird,
Incapable of planting in my breast
A yearning without object. All Thy hands
Have made is correlated. Who hath heard
Of swallows flying on a futile quest,
Or souls reliant wrecked on treacherous sands?

3. So life's failure is translated into God's purpose. Moses stood on Pisgah and looked

[1] J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, 1834-1881*, i. 339.

[1] H. W. Mabie, *My Study Fire*, ii. 144.

over Jordan to the far-off hills and saw dimly the beauty of the land that flowed with milk and honey. Perfect it seemed as he saw it from that mountain, but in the years that came after he was gone the warring Israelites found that, though much was gained, there still was an incompleteness that made them lift their eyes to invisible hills and dream of a nobler life than the life they lived in that beautiful land. And he who had turned sorrowfully away from that which was not to be his came to better things, and God made perfect for him all that he had loved so well and failed to reach. Again and again this story repeats itself. Our partial achievements, our failures so real and so sad, are made part of a new and better history than we have ever hoped for. Life takes away from us some of the things we craved and God gives us pain where we looked for joy, and then sorrowfully we turn away from the land we have seen and on our lonely Pisgah bid farewell to the hopes and dreams of a lifetime. And then God opens to us Himself, and we pass out of the sights and sounds of the world and the little and imperfect aims that have won us so long and left us so despairing, into the very presence and heart of God, and know that now the best will be for us always.

On the Heights of Great Endeavour,—
Where Attainment looms forever,—
Toiling upward, ceasing never,
Climb the fateful Centuries:
Up the difficult, dark places,
Joy and anguish in their faces,
On they strive, the living races,
And the dead, that no one sees.

Shape by shape, with brow uplifted,
One by one, where night is rifted,
Pass the victors, many gifted,
Where the heaven opens wide:
While below them, fallen or seated,
Mummy-like, or shadow-sheeted,
Stretch the lines of the defeated,—
Scattered on the mountainside.

And each victor, passing wanly,
Gazes on that Presence lonely,
With unmoving eyes where only
Grow the dreams for which men die:
Grow the dreams, the far, ethereal,
That on earth assume material
Attributes, and, vast, imperial,
Rear their battlements on high.

Kingdoms, marble-templed, towered,
Where the Arts, the many-dowered,—
That for centuries have flowered,
Trampled under War's wild heel,—
Lift immortal heads and golden,
Blossoms of the times called olden,
Soul-alluring, earth-withholden,
Universal in appeal.

As they enter,—high and lowly,—
On the hush these words fall slowly:—
'Ye who kept your purpose holy,
Never dreamed your cause was vain,
Look!—Behold, through time abating,
How the long, sad days of waiting,
Striving, starving, hoping, hating,
Helped your spirit to attain.

'For to all who dream, aspire,
Marry effort to desire,
On the cosmic heights, in fire
Beaconing, my form appears:—
I am marvel, I am morning!
Beauty in man's heart and warning!—
On my face none looks with scorning,
And no soul attains who fears.' [1]

## Life's Unfinished Tasks.

Deut. xxxiv. 7.—'And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.'

1. What were the conditions under which death came to Moses?

(1) He died while as yet his physical strength was undiminished. 'His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.' He died, that is, as the greater proportion of men die, not of sheer physical decay, the natural wasting away of the forces of life—'One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet';—'the house of life is broken into'; sudden arrest is put upon its vigour; its pulse is touched into death; the warrior falls in the ardour of battle, the builder drops from the

[1] M. J. Cawein.

scaffold. 'My years hast thou shortened; I am cut off in the midst of my days.'

(2) Moses died while as yet there seemed a great work for him to do—the Jordan to be passed, Jericho to be conquered, the Canaanites driven out, the tribes led to their inheritance, the social, legislative, and religious organization of the people to be completed. So the field is left half ploughed, the building half erected, the book half written. Die when we may, we always leave something unfinished; we always carry to our grave some unrealized purpose. Only, the inopportuneness sometimes seems so signal that it is a mystery and a sorrow. The history of both the world and the Church is full of proverbial instances, were it needful to cite them. Rarely is the worker permitted to complete his work, rarely is the moment when arrest is put upon it the moment that we should choose. 'God's thoughts are not as our thoughts.'

(3) Moses died just when bright prospects of realization filled his eye, when all the hope of his life was about to be fulfilled; the cup was dashed from his lips just as it was lifted that he might drink.

2. What can we say to all this? Can we say anything that will explain its mystery, or justify the ways of God to man? We are unable to form judgments concerning individual instances; but we may perhaps recognize three or four general principles, which will help our faith and comfort our heart. The thing may be inscrutable, and yet we may assure ourselves of the righteousness and love of Him who does it.

(1) Success is not the chief nobility of life. Who dared have told Moses on Nebo that, inasmuch as entrance to Canaan was forbidden him, it would have been better for him never to have left Egypt? That grand heroic life of the wilderness had been lived. Its very trials had perfected his character. He had become what no success in Egypt could have made him, what failure to enter Canaan could not hinder him from becoming. To disparage success would be affectation; the end that is not worth winning is not worth striving for. But success is generally more important to others than to the worker himself: so far as he is concerned, it is more important to become than to achieve. Service is greater than its results. To serve greatly and fail is better than to realize without service. Good that is put into my hand is a poor possession compared with the good that long struggle and self-discipline win. The very disappointments of a life that nobly strives, the very sorrows of a heart that nobly loves, are better than a heart without striving or love:—

> 'Tis better to have loved and lost,
> Than never to have loved at all.

Better to die on Nebo than on the Egyptian throne. In the great character which he had moulded, in the love and veneration which he had won, Moses realized a nobler reward than Canaan.

¶ The Luapula River, on the banks of which I now write, was the last word on his [Livingstone's] lips. *'Siku ngapi ku Luapula?'* ('How many days to the Luapula?'). This is the black riverine artery that cut off his route up the right bank and is thereby a sure symbol of the two divisions of this chronicle. The crossing Arabs, the wandering hunters going east, all brought fuel to feed the flame of his dying desire to see this Katanga of his dreams. But it was not to be, not to be. That he died in a futile search for a geographic phantom is less than nothing when you recall the fact that the souls of the sons of men are greater than their business. Not to do a certain work but to *be* a certain thing was his African destiny in dying. Unless, indeed (and there is no 'unless' about it), *his* being was his doing.[1]

(2) The chief blessedness of life is capability of service. Better for Moses that he should die on Nebo, his service incomplete, than that he should have outlived his faculty of service, and fallen into the decrepitude and senility of an Eli or a David. What is better for a man than for death to find him in the vigour of his service, doing noble work; his hand upon the implements of his toil; working with his might; with an earnestness and an efficiency that will be the commendation of both the

[1] Dan Crawford, *Back to the Long Grass*, 9.

workman and the work? Blessed is the man whom death finds doing work full of noble aims and gracious influences! It is the verdict of the Master Himself; 'Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.'

(3) It is a blessed thing to die when the work has been so far done that it justifies the worker, demonstrates his character, vindicates his nobleness; so that he is not ashamed to leave it for completion; so that his friends are proud of its unfinished fragments. God does not always grant this. Even then the faithful servant will accept the conditions. He puts into the Master's hand his reputation as well as his service. His 'record is on high.' But if, as with Moses, God continue him in His work until all its true glory has been won, and only the formal sanction of success is wanting, it is a grace and a blessedness. Nelson dies in the moment of victory; Captain Hardy's assurance of it is the sufficient consolation of his premature death. So Moses dies, with the wilderness all passed; the people whom he had led, on the verge of Canaan; the gathered reverence of the nation round him; and he himself in singular and exalted favour with God.

(4) The formal denial of our hopes may be the means of perfecting our character. Patient acquiescence in disappointment is a higher grace than satisfaction with success. To endure piously is more than to achieve. The most illustrious character has its defects, the most disciplined its immaturity; and sometimes God can work in us the last grace of perfection only by shutting us up to Himself. Never, as on Nebo, did God so draw to Himself the heart of His servant, and by no means so effectually as by this great disappointment. We never so seek God as when other things are denied us; we never seek Him so earnestly and so spiritually as in worldly disappointments and sorrows. God can educate our perverse affections for the enjoyment of Himself only by bereaving them. It is a rough school for piety, but it is a salutary and effective one. How often, if we were permitted to possess it according to our desire, earthly good would satisfy us! How creature love would absorb our affections if its enjoyment were continued to us! How pride of achievement would hinder humility! How sense would blind the eye of faith! With all the disappointments and sorrows of life, how carnal our hearts remain! What would they be if they had neither disappointment nor sorrow? It is not easy, when the fullness of things on earth is appealing to us, to 'set our affections on things above.'

(5) God fulfilled His promises and the hopes of His servant in a way deeper and higher than he anticipated. A man may leave his work unfinished, his purposes unfulfilled, his goal unreached, but he does not therefore fail. The spiritual end which these sought may be reached in a grander way. So Abraham failed of the hope of Canaan, his only possession in it being a grave. But Canaan to him was but a suggestive type of a better country, and grandly he realized God's spiritual heritage. The prophecies of the Messiah, as the old, pious Jew conceived them, were never realized; but how much more grandly they were fulfilled in the Christ! The disciples did not realize their dream of the Kingdom of Heaven in which they were to 'sit on thrones'; but what a glorious spiritual heritage the Resurrection conferred upon them—a 'kingdom of God within them!' The Pentecostal Church did not see the millennium for which it looked; but how much grander than their local and limited hope, the millennium which is the result of ages of cross-bearing and testifying and martyrdom! So every Christian age, every Christian experience, has its dream of a goal to be immediately reached, a glory to be personally attained. The Church is to achieve its triumph, the soul its religious beautitude: instead of which come years of arduous struggle and temptation and seeming failure. But these are only profounder processes whereby God is working out greater and more glorious spiritual fulfilments. The thing of which we dream is denied us, but only that a far more glorious realization of our desire may be given us. That which is material is but the shadow of the spiritual, to which it unconsciously leads us on. Nay, those who realize the most of it feel the greatest dis-

appointment with it, and are the most urged and enlarged by it to the spiritual good that lies beyond it. God's spiritual fulfilments of the dreams and desires of every noble life are above all that we can ask or think.

For songs divine, half heard and half withholden,
That drop on silver pinions down the sky;
For visions fair, half hid and half beholden,
Compelling hopes that knew not how to die.

For all ungathered roses, red as fire,
That lit my way with lavish, fragrant flame;
For all the old sweet pain of great desire,
That led me hither captive as I came.

For all, on bended knees, I make thanksgiving:
The unachieved that spurred my steps along;
The unattained that made life worth the living;
The unfulfilled that kept my spirit strong.

## Moses' Work.

Deut. xxxiv. 10.—'And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.'

Moses is one of the few historic characters that are well-nigh perfect. What a place in the world's imagination he fills!—from the day when he was so romantically rescued from the bulrushes, and became heir to the Egyptian throne, to the day when, abjuring all, he fled to the wilderness of Sinai; from the day when he went to Pharaoh, with his proud, perilous mandate, 'Let my people go,' to the day when he died in solitude on Nebo—died, as the Rabbins say, 'by the kiss of God.' A foundling, a courtier, a patriot, an outlaw, a miracle-worker, a warrior, a legislator, a national leader—he surely fulfilled the greatest mission ever entrusted to man, and exhibited the noblest elements of character ever moulded into greatness. In the grandeur of his conceptions, the greatness of his achievements, the heroism of his patience, and the magnanimity of his self-sacrifice, he stands foremost among the sons of men.

1. What was that work to which Moses put his hand? What was the peculiar nature of the task he undertook? He undertook not only to emancipate his brethren from slavery, but to fashion them into a nation, and to lead them into a country where they might work out their own destiny. With no aid, except that given by his brother Aaron, he, a fugitive from Pharaoh, presents himself before Pharaoh and demands, in the name of an unacknowledged God, the deliverance of his fellow-Israelites. The boldness of such a demand stands unparalleled. To venture, as Moses did, before a despotic ruler, with no greater equipment than his shepherd's staff, demanding that the king of Egypt should let a vast number of his valuable bondmen free, was in itself an act of sublime courage. To persist in the demand after it had been refused, and to do so in the face of the fact that the despot had doubled the task of his slaves because of the demand for their release, was an instance of heroism more sublime still.

2. But Moses never falters in his Divinely-appointed task, and in the end he finds himself at the head of his emancipated brethren. But instead of ending, his task had only just begun. He finds himself in the wilderness leading a horde of free men, who, through hundreds of years of oppression, had lost all sense of appreciation of freedom and of the work achieved for them by their liberator. The lamentations and cries of young and old for the flesh-pots of Egypt, for the food and shelter which freedom in the wilderness made uncertain and precarious, raised a storm which would have unnerved a lesser man. It was this crisis that brought out the pre-eminent greatness of Moses and his remarkable power over men. What was it that he set himself to accomplish? To take a mass of unthinking slaves and make of them self-governing citizens. No other leader in history ever undertook a task so formidable. Up to that time it seemed the natural condition that the human family should be ruled by kings and despots. The thought of self-government had not as yet entered the human mind. With the traditions of royalty, hoary with age, even the en-

lightened and cultured world would not have attempted to establish among themselves any other government than a monarchy or a despotism. And yet here is a man who, possessing the power to make himself a monarch and establish a hereditary kingdom, sets aside all notion of human royalty and establishes a theocracy—a government of which God is the King and all the people are God's subjects. If the thought of self had prevailed with Moses, it would have been an easy matter to follow in the footsteps of other leaders of his time and have himself declared king and worshipped as a demigod. Instead of this, he, for the first time in the history of the human race, established the doctrine of liberty, equality, and fraternity. For himself he assumed no titles and asked no privileges. He did not even seek a successor in his son. Joshua, a man of another tribe, is selected to succeed him. In this, as in so many other things, Moses showed himself to be the meekest man on earth.

3. The liberty he promulgated was a liberty conditioned by service—the service of a Higher Power. If Abraham was the first to conceive the idea of a spiritual God, Moses was the first to preach this belief to a whole people. He had to take men, rude, ignorant, unlettered—a people filled with the superstitions they had imbibed during their long stay in Egypt—and to implant in their hearts the wholly new conception of an unimaged, invisible God. Even the educated and enlightened of those days demanded an imaged and visible deity—the sun, the moon, animals, idols of wood or stone that could be seen and felt. Yet Moses gave his people none of these. You must believe in a Spirit, he says, which is omnipresent, yet beyond the power of the human eye to discern; a Spirit which is almighty, yet shows itself only through its works; a Spirit without form or body, yet making itself felt everywhere. Like an artist who produces the noblest specimen of sculpture out of a piece of inert stone, so Moses took a degraded type of humanity and impressed them with the highest conception of Deity. Heine puts the thought with his accustomed brilliancy when he says: 'Moses built himself pyramids, carved human obelisks; he took a poor shepherd family and created a nation from it, a great, eternal, holy people, destined to outlive centuries and to serve as a pattern to all other nations, even as a prototype to the whole of mankind; he created Israel.'

The basis of the Mosaic teaching is righteousness. The God whom Israel is to acknowledge is a God of law and justice. The spirit of the Pharaohs was one of injustice. Most of the land belonged to the king. The people, at best, were his tenants. At his pleasure he could compel them to perform whatever service he deemed necessary. Human lives were to him no more sacred than the lives of so many flies. Untold millions of hours of unrequited human toil were expended in the building of the pyramids and the great piles that were to contain the withered mummies of royalty. The taskmasters freely used the whip and the lash on the backs of the unfortunate workers. Such cruelties and injustices disappeared under the government established by Moses. The rights of the humblest Israelite were as much respected as were the rights of Moses himself. In matters of law there was no wresting of judgment, no respecting of persons. Rights, duties, and responsibilities were made common to all. The spirit of absolute equality which ruled the mind of Moses manifested itself in the law that the meanest subject in the theocratic State should possess a portion of land equally with the greatest in Israel. In this, as in so much else in his legislation, Moses cut himself off from all tradition and from the influence of his Egyptian training and environment. He clearly saw the evils of the system in which he had grown up, and in his own mind he worked out the remedies of the social evils by which he was surrounded. Now that the opportunity was before him he put the remedies into practice, and the ages since passed have proved his genius as the world's greatest lawgiver and statesman.

# THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

# THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

## INTRODUCTION

The Book of Joshua is now often classed with the first five Books of the Bible under the designation of the *Hexateuch*. In support of this arrangement it is pointed out not only that it is for the most part the work of the same authors as the preceding Books, but that with them it forms a complete account of the *Origines* of the Hebrew nation. On the other hand it marks the opening of a new stage in the history of Israel; it is associated with a new name, and the theme is no longer the revelation of God's law. On these grounds it may be regarded as distinct from the Pentateuch, and more closely related to the purely historical Books—Judges, Samuel, and Kings. This, in fact, is the classification adopted by the Jews, at least from the time of Ezra.

1. *Sources and composition.*—The evidence for regarding the Book of Joshua as not written by a single hand, or in a single generation, is of the same character as that which has led to the analysis of the Pentateuch into several component documents; it arises partly from the subject-matter, and partly from the language employed.

(1) The older sources technically known as J (9th cent. B.C.) and E (9th-8th cent. B.C.) contribute the main narratives in the story of the conquest (chs. i.-xii.). The two run side by side; but they are often so skilfully blended that it is difficult to separate them, and the analysis can only be experimental and uncertain.

(2) The next stage in the history of the text was the combination of J and E to form a single narrative. This process, in Joshua as in the Pentateuch, was carried out by a redactor who may be called RJE. In weaving the two documents together he did his work so thoroughly that, as remarked above, it is often almost impossible to disentangle them; at the same time he found it necessary to introduce links of connexion and harmonizing phrases, such as can be detected in ii. 17, vi. 15*b*, 17*b*, viii. 13, x. 10*b*.

(3) At the stage which follows, the Book of Joshua underwent a transformation. When J. and E are marked off in chs. i.-xii., what remains is chiefly the work of the Deuteronomic redactor; it can be recognized at once by its strongly marked characteristics of language and ideas. Thus the hand of RD is unmistakable in the exhortations in ch. i., the comments on the memorial stones and the circumcision at Gilgal, the account of the altar on Ebal, and the summary of Joshua's conquests (iv. 21—v. 1, 4-8, viii. 30-35, x. 28-43, xi. 10—xii. 24). According to RD, Joshua and all Israel overthrow city after city in the course of a triumphal progress through the land, put the natives to the sword, and utterly destroy all that breathe; the instructions laid down in Deuteronomy are carried out to the letter by the faithful successor of Moses (*e.g.* i. 12ff., iv. 12, viii. 30-35, x. 28-43, xi. 10-23, xiii. 2-6, 8-12, xxi. 43ff., xxiii. 1-6). These Deuteronomic passages have the character of expansions rather than of extracts; there is no reason to suppose that RD ever composed

an independent history of the times; he conceived it to be his function to annotate the older stories, and in his own fashion to drive the moral home.

As we go through the Book we discover that several editors of the Deuteronomic school have been at work upon the text, for the annotations are sometimes inconsistent, and give expression to divergent views on the same subject. We are to think, then, of the Deuteronomic revision as the work of more than one hand; it was in fact a process which lasted for a considerable time.

(4) There remains the share contributed by P (5th cent. B.C.). It can be identified by its technical language and by the subjects chosen for treatment. P seems to have contained a history of the invasion and conquest (iv. 13, 15-19, v. 10-12, ix. 15*c*, 17-21); but the extracts from this source are brief and fragmentary until the opportunity comes to describe the settlement of the land. Then P gives an elaborate survey of the possessions and boundaries of the tribes, on the assumption that the land was entirely conquered (xiii. 15-xix. 51). The allotment takes place at the sanctuary of Shiloh, where the tent of meeting is duly erected; the cities of refuge and cities for the Levites and priests are set apart; and it is characteristic of P's reverence for the institutions of religion that *Eleazar the priest* appears as the leader of the nation, with Joshua in the second place (xiv. 1, xvii. 4, xix. 51, xxi. 1).

Besides the extracts from the Priestly history (P), we find a number of supplementary notes by Priestly revisers (RP) scattered throughout the Book. Long after the Priestly Code was published the Priestly writers inserted one noteworthy addition, the story of the altar by the Jordan xxii. 9-34, which is probably the latest piece of extended composition in the Hexateuch. The text must have remained open to revisers and harmonists down to a comparatively late period, perhaps to *c.* 200 B.C.

It should be noted that the symbols J, E, D, P and RJE, RD, RP must not be taken to represent individual writers. In speaking of the sources we cannot altogether avoid personifying them, but schools rather than persons ought to be in our minds all the time. The symbols are meant to distinguish so many different types of composition. Each separate process was going on perhaps for several generations; in no case was it the product of a single author.

2. *Historical value.*—(1) Obviously, for strictly historical purposes, our primary authorities must be the early writings J and E. But these were composed long after the events recorded; behind the earliest written sources lay a period when the traditions existed only on the lips of the people, and passed through the inevitable vicissitudes of oral transmission. In the story of the fall of Jericho, for example, J and E represent the tradition at the second or third stage of its growth, not its simple, original form. The later writings D and P are so absorbed in their own point of view that they cannot be used as authorities for the period; their value is indirect rather than direct. The interest of them must be found in the light which they cast upon the religious principles and aims of the time when they were written. Thus RD tells about Joshua, not as he really was, but as the writers of the 7th century pictured him; the portrait, if it can be called one, is not a study from the life, but the creation of a fervid believer and patriot. We may be sure that nothing like the wholesale slaughter of the natives and the irresistible victories of the Israelites ever took place; the early traditions give a very different account of the matter; but some five hundred years after the invasion the Deuteronomic scribes expressed in this way their detestation of Canaanite enormities, and their conviction that Jehovah was utterly hostile to such abominations. We will not refuse our tribute to the zeal of these devout writers, for whom the Law and its precepts, the Temple and its service, were the very breath of life. Their methods of writing history were not ours; they wanted the lessons of the past more than the facts; there were facts enough for their purpose in the stories and songs and local legends handed down by tradition, and these they did not scruple to heighten or enlarge

in order to enforce what they valued more than bare facts—the tokens of Jehovah's power, the revelation of His will, the evidence that He was watching over Israel.

If, then, we go to the Book of Joshua for authentic history we shall be disappointed. It has indeed preserved the memory of some vital episodes in Israel's career, but it treats them in what we should call a symbolical rather than a historical manner. The modern student, trained to the inductive method of investigating the past, finds it difficult, without an effort of imaginative sympathy, to appreciate the deductive methods of the Biblical historians. We try to free our minds from prepossessions and to find out what actually happened; they, on the other hand, started from the opposite position: they had made up their minds already, and looked to the past for the confirmation of their principles. And we can recognize the element of truth in their philosophy of history. If they discovered and laid stress upon the religious significance of the crossing of the Jordan, the fall of Jericho, the battle of Beth-horon, the occupation of the Promised Land, they only did what poets and teachers have done ever since, and valued these events as imperishable symbols of encouragement, and of the ultimate triumph of the forces which make for righteousness. [1]

(2) The Book of Joshua gives us no information as to the time of the invasion of Canaan by Israel, though we may infer that its narrative extends over five or seven years from the death of Moses. It is natural to ask whether there is any external evidence as to the date of this invasion. This question admits of an affirmative answer since the discovery of the Tell-el-Amarna Letters in 1881, and of the 'Israel' Inscription at Thebes in 1896. The latter of these may be named first, as it appears to give us a fixed date before which the Israelites had entered Canaan. The inscription gives a list of Syrian vassals of the Egyptian king Meneptah, the son of Ramses II, about the middle of the thirteenth century before Christ. In this list appears the name 'Israel,' in such a connexion that settlement in Palestine seems already presupposed, though Israel is by no means the ruling people of Palestine. This gives us, therefore, the date 1250 as the latest possible for the entrance of Israel into Canaan. The evidence of the Tell-el-Amarna Letters is less easy to summarize, or even to utilize with certainty. These 300 or more tablets preserve correspondence of Amenophis III and IV of Egypt with various kings of Western Asia, and especially with officials and vassals in Palestine. The latter gives us a picture of Palestine about 1400 B.C., and the disorder revealed shows how easy it must have been for invading tribes to secure an entrance. The Egyptian sovereignty over Syria was threatened both by such invasion and by civil war, since certain of the vassal kings seem to have hired foreign mercenaries, *e.g.*, Bedouin tribes, against their rivals. In particular, there are letters from Abdchiba, of Jerusalem, complaining that 'the Chabiri are occupying the King's cities.' These Chabiri appear in various parts of Palestine, and it has been proposed to see in them the general group of 'Hebrews' (*i.e.*, 'people from the other side'), 'tribes playing the same part as did the Israelites later' (Winckler, *Die Keilinschriften*[3], p. 198). The pressure of these Chabiri on Syria is of much wider extent than that described in the Biblical records of Israel's invasion, and many scholars contend that there are not sufficient points of contact to justify the identification. But there is little in the *earliest* accounts of Israel's invasion which would fail to fit into the general background of the movements of the Chabiri. The Tell-el-Amarna period of about 1400 B.C. appears to form the *terminus a quo*, as the Israel Inscription of 1250 B.C. forms the *terminus ad quem*, for Israel's settlement in Palestine. [1]

3. *Plan of the Book.*—The Book falls naturally into three divisions—the conquest of Canaan (i.-xii.), the division of the land among the tribes (xiii.-xxii.), and Joshua's farewell (xxiii.-xxiv.).

(1) *The conquest of Canaan* (i.-xii.).—After making his arrangements, and sending out spies to Jericho, Joshua led the people across

[1] See G. A. Cooke, *The Book of Joshua*, p. xvff.

[1] H. Wheeler Robinson, *Deuteronomy, Joshua*, 261f.

Jordan and formed a fortified camp at Gilgal, where twelve stones taken out of the bed of Jordan were set up as a memorial. Here care was taken that all the people should be circumcised, and the Passover was duly observed. Then, encouraged by a vision of the 'Captain of the Lord's host', Joshua proceeded to invest Jericho. The fall of that town was quickly followed by the capture of Ai by stratagem, after Israel had sustained a check there owing to the sin of Achan. The ceremony of the Blessing and Cursing on Ebal and Gerizim was then duly observed according to the injunction of Deut. xxvii. 11-14. The dread which now fell upon the tribes of Canaan is illustrated by the story of the Gibeonites, who, by a trick, induced Israel to enter into a league with them. This league subjected Gibeon to an attack by five kings, and Joshua, coming to the assistance of his allies, won a decisive battle at Beth-horon. A campaign was then prosecuted which reduced seven kings in succession, and brought the whole of southern Canaan into subjection (x.). The scene then shifts to Northern Palestine, where a great battle at the waters of Merom results in the overthrow of Jabin, king of Hazor, and his allies (xi. 1-15); and the section concludes with a summary of Joshua's victories, in both the north and the south.

(2) *The division of the land among the tribes* (xiii.-xxii.).—This section has been likened to the *Domesday Book* of William the Conqueror. It gives the boundaries of the various tribes as decided by lot under the superintendence of Joshua and Eleazar (xiv. 1-5). The six cities of refuge are also appointed in accordance with Num. xxxv. 9, etc., and Deut. xix., and forty-eight cities are assigned to the Levites as commanded in Num. xxxv. 1-8. Shiloh at this period was the religious centre of the nation, and there the tabernacle was set up (xviii. 1).

(3) *Joshua's farewell* (xxiii., xxiv.).—In xxiii. is contained Joshua's first farewell speech, in which he exhorts the people, by the memory of what God has done for them, to keep themselves distinct from the native races, and not to be seduced into the worship of their gods. Otherwise, he warns them, God would not complete the subjection of the Canaanites, but they would be left as snares and traps, as scourges in their sides and thorns in their eyes (v. 13).

In chapter xxiv. we have a later and final speech, in which Joshua recounts concisely the history of Israel from the days of Abraham downward, and, more solemnly than before, adjures them to cleave to the worship of the one true God. This speech was made at Shechem, whither Joshua had summoned an assembly of 'the elders of Israel and their heads, their judges and their officers,' and there the covenant with God was solemnly renewed, and a stone was erected as a memorial of what had there taken place (*v.* 26). The section ends with the death and burial of Joshua and of Eleazar, and the interment of Joseph's remains, which had been brought up from Egypt.

4. *The religious teaching of the Book.*

(1) As was to be expected, the religious teaching of the Book is found mainly in its later strata—the Deuteronomic and the Priestly. It is to the Deuteronomist sections that we owe the fervent religious exhortations to Joshua and the people, which are the portions of the Book most frequently employed in Christian preaching and teaching. The story of Achan, as it has passed from the hand of the latest redactor, is a lesson of great power, on the possibility of individual selfishness and avarice wrecking the enterprises of the whole community. But to one of the earliest sources, probably E we owe the finest religious conception in the Book, that of the appearance of the Angel of Joshua (v. 13-15). It is a noble illustration of the truth that, in the great causes of God upon the earth, the leaders, however supreme and solitary they seem, are themselves led. There is a rock higher than they; their shoulders, however broad, have not to bear alone the awful burden of responsibility. The sense of supernatural conduct and protection, and the consequent reverence and humility which form the spirit of all Israel's history, have nowhere in the OT received a more beautiful expression than in this early fragment.[1]

[1] G. A. Smith, in *HDB* ii. 788.

(2) Many persons have been staggered, and many more have professed to be staggered, by the slaughter of the Canaanites. In order to make room for Israel, tribes which had long inhabited Palestine were exterminated. And in the sacred narrative this ruthless massacre, so far from being condemned as a sin, or reproved as barbaric cruelty, is attributed to the express command of God. 'Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth, but thou shalt utterly destroy them.' No doubt the Canaanites were idolaters; but is this not to propagate religion by the sword? Is not this fierce irruption into Canaan with fire and sword precisely similar to the wave of Muhammadan conquest? Is it any way different from the most pitiless of heathen invasions? How can we justify such an acquisition of territory as this, whilst we are, at least in theory, so scrupulous about adding one acre of unjustly acquired land to our dominions, and cannot let one drop of blood be shed, even in a conquered race, without inquiry?

Now if this summary condemnation be justified, it only remains for us to blot out of our Bible histories the call of Abraham, the apostleship of Moses in the desert and the very words '*Promised* Land.' These things have then no meaning, and we must declare unmistakably that the settlement of the ancestors of Jesus Christ in Palestine was due to a bold and lucky stroke on the part of wandering adventurers. But we are not prepared to accept a verdict which seems to us to sacrifice one of the general principles of God's government of the world to the very modern cry of universal disarmament. Certainly, war is a child of the Fall. It is wicked and human. It is no better than humanity. This does not prevent God from using humanity, and the institutions of a world sunk in evil, to bring good out of evil and make all things work together for the good of those who love Him. Disease, calamity, death itself, guided by His redeeming will, became, from the beginning of the preparatory Covenant, ministers of His merciful intentions. To question this truth is to discredit the whole Prophetic theology. Since Jesus came to earth to inaugurate a spiritual humanity which should be mistress of its own destinies and conscious of true brotherly love, God, in the Christian world, no longer admits war. He merely endures it. But before the age of the gospel it appears not at all a matter for surprise that Jehovah Zebaoth, the Lord of Hosts, conforming to the barbarous times of the Amalekite and the Amorite, disposed, through war, of a province of His empire for the sake of setting in the centre of three continents on the shores of the Mediterranean, the cradle of Redemption. When He directs a battle, it is not to make His Divine power the accomplice of the right of the stronger, but to execute His judgments, to accustom humanity to associate the idea of life with that of progress and the idea of death with that of decadence, and to eliminate the causes of dissolution from the world. There is a law for bodies of men as for individuals, and Providence maintains its rights in both cases.

Therefore our faith in the justice of Jehovah, so far from being alarmed, is filled with wonder when it contemplates that corner of the world selected by God to be, as it were, a fiery furnace for the refining of the moral conscience of man. Providence is there at work, now subjecting to the *Jehovist* tribes the followers of Baal and Ashtoreth; now by means of the Assyrians breaking the faithless sceptre of Israel and Judah; now through Cyrus' victory over Babylon restoring the Jewish exiles to the Saviour's cradle, and, finally, sending the Roman eagles to devastate those spots which had witnessed so many signs of Divine favour and were stained with the inexpiable crime of the crucifixion of the Son of God. All that the modern conscience has a right to claim is that the history of Providential intervention should not attribute to Jehovah commandments tending to exaggerate barbarity, from which it was His aim and object to wean mankind. This would apply to the custom of 'utter destruction' or '*herem*,' which means 'consecration to God by death.' In this connection, all Christians will be glad to learn that this savage law of extermination, so long represented as peculiar to the Old Testament and necessitated by the holiness of its God, was in reality a political and religious

custom of the Canaanitish tribes in the midst of which Israel came to settle. To clear the world before him, exterminate his enemies and drag the statues of the vanquished gods before his face was the acknowledged way to honour Baal. We are therefore justified in regarding this barbarous mode of securing a conquest not as a *Jehovist* law, but as a pagan custom which the misguided Israelites had thought themselves obliged to adopt in order to secure their possessions and honour the worship of their Elohim.

## Moses' Minister.

Josh. i. 1.—'Now it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' minister.'

Never, in the history of the Chosen People, could there have been such a blank as that when they became conscious that 'Moses the servant of the Lord was dead.' He who had been their leader, their lawgiver, their oracle, as far back as their memory could reach, was taken from them at the very moment when they seemed most to need him. It was to fill up this blank that Joshua was called. The narrative labours to impress upon us the sense that the continuity of the nation and of its high purpose was not broken by the change of person and situation. 'As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.' There was, indeed, as yet, no hereditary or fixed succession. But the germ of that succession is better represented by the very contrast between Moses and Joshua than in any other passage in the sacred history.

The difference, indeed, was marked as strongly as possible. Joshua was a soldier—the first soldier consecrated by the sacred history. He was not a teacher or a prophet. He, one may say, hated the extension of prophecy. He could not restrain his indignation when he heard that there were two unauthorized prophesiers within the camp. 'My lord Moses, forbid them.' He was a simple, straightforward, undaunted soldier. His first appearance is in battle. 'Choose out men, go out, fight with Amalek.' He is always known by his spear or javelin, slung between his shoulders or stretched out in his hand. The one quality which is required of him and descried in him is that he was 'very courageous.' He was 'strong and of a good courage.' 'He was not afraid or dismayed.' He turned neither to the right hand nor to the left; but at the head of the hosts of Israel he went right forward. He wavered not for a moment; he was here, he was there, he was everywhere, as the emergency called for him. He had no words of wisdom, except those which shrewd common sense and public spirit dictated. To him the Divine revelation was made not in the burning bush or in the still small voice, but, as the Captain of the Lord's host, with a drawn sword in his hand; and that drawn and glittering sword was the vision which went before him through the land, till all the kings of Canaan were subdued beneath his feet.

1. The first point, then, to observe in the character of Joshua is *the power of faith*—faith in God, faith in the work he had to do, and, therefore, faith in himself. It is faith that gives power in life, when the faith is worth the name—that is, when it is belief in realities and not in lies; when it is faith in pure, beautiful and righteous things and persons. If we have such faith, all things are possible. By such faith Joshua subdued Canaan; established the nation of Israel; realized that which seemed impossible; and died, having attained his end. And faith is equally powerful against our spiritual foes, against the evil in us. The man who can truly say—'I believe in God the Father Almighty,' is master of the world and of himself. The man who can truly say—'I believe in the forgiveness of sins,' is already—not in fact, but in certainty of future righteousness—freed from sin. There is nothing evil in him which will not finally be overthrown.

¶ There are two stages in religious experience: there is the fear and horror of sin, in which passion clutches at the skirts of an unknown and awful Deity; but there is another and more blessed state into which we may come: I mean the victorious faith, peace and fellowship of the sons of God. For those who enter into that communion there is no devil,

no Power of Evil, no duality in the worlds of God.[1]

2. As the result of such a faith there follows naturally the next quality in Joshua's character—*the quality of courage.* Christ puts the connection between these two qualities with great clearness—'Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?' Faith is always the best ground of courage; faith in oneself—the ground of physical courage; faith in the rightness of one's cause, or the rightness of one's thoughts on any subject—the ground of moral courage; faith in God and God's character—the ground of spiritual courage; and when the whole three kinds of faith are wrought together we have a character like Joshua's, strong and very courageous, mighty in battle, mighty in organization, mighty in making God's ways prevail. And they ought to be wrought together. Physical courage by itself is not a moral quality. It strengthens and gives splendour to moral qualities; but alone, it is to be praised only as good health or good looks are praised. It needs to be linked to moral acts, or used on behalf of true ideas, before it can be highly honoured. Shown in defence of the weak, in sacrifice for love's sake, in death or endurance for others, for the sake of a cause on which vast issues to mankind depend, it shares in the beauty and greatness of these things, and is worthily honoured. The animal quality is made at one with moral, imaginative, and spiritual qualities, and is, in the union, ennobled.

¶ Really since the company of Martyrs of the early centuries of Christendom, never has the world known such legions of heroes. It uplifts human nature. . . . Day after day the French papers publish lists of heroic deeds, really by the hundred now, worthy of the Victoria Cross. In the paper to-day an English officer (no name) is reported as being attended, wounded badly; and seeing the surgeon start, he said: 'What's the matter? Oh! only that!' And when the surgeon asked him how he could possibly fight in such pain as was involved by a malignant cancer and how he was allowed to go, he answered that no one knew! He'd only been sure of it just when war began and told no one, as he wished to use his last months or weeks for his King and country; and the surgeon who repeated the story said: 'The courage and determination involved were unimaginable.'[1]

[1] H. B. Binns, in *Present Day Papers*, iii. 69.

3. Out of the clear view of what Joshua had to do, and his faith in its rightness, and in his own power, and out of the great bravery of the man, arose the main quality of his warlike genius—a quality which is all but constant in every great commander; in Alexander, Cæsar, Frederick, Marlborough, Napoleon—*the quality of swiftness.* What is to be done presents itself at once, and simultaneously comes the doing of it. Both are carried out before another man would have made the first step. Twice in Joshua's history we meet this swiftness. The first time was when the five kings of the Canaanites attacked Gibeon; and the second when the Northern kings leagued against him and made their camp at Merom. The sudden rapidity of the march is dwelt on in both cases. Joshua no sooner hears the news than he is afoot. He marches all night, and ere sleep is out of the eyes of his enemies his small army is in their midst, shouting its terror-striking war cry.

Swiftness is a quality we sorely want in life, and as rarely have—swiftness of decision, swiftness of action. 'It belongs to genius,' some say, 'and it is no use trying for it.' No; that is not the true way to put it. It does belong to genius, but it does so because of the steady work, and the long training, and the imaginative exercise of the intelligence which genius has put itself through. These are its roots—not a kind of supernatural insight—and these things we all may do. Genius labours, and thinks, and makes experiments, and acts, and tries all methods of action and thought, and never ceases to do this work; therefore, when a new event or a new crisis calls on it for action, it can think and act swiftly. That is the real source of rapidity, and we may all get a great deal of it in the same way—not all that genius has, but enough to enable us to act more readily than we are

[1] *Sophia de Franqueville*, 344.

accustomed to do. In business, in the conduct of life, in political and literary movements, that is the lesson. And it is just as true in the spiritual life of the soul. Think quickly, act like lightning, if you would be great. But remember that quick thought and swift action, without years of work and thought behind them, may bring you to nothing but ruin. Opportunity can be grasped with success only when you have first got the hands to hold it.

¶ When war was declared between France and Germany, Count von Moltke, the German general, was prepared for it. Word was brought to him late at night, after he had gone to bed. 'Very well,' he said to the messenger, 'the third portfolio on the left!' and he went to sleep again.[1]

## The Worker and the Work.

Josh. i. 2.—'Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise.'

1. When a church or a nation is deprived by death of the noble service of a great man, we may imagine at the time that the gap is too wide and great ever to be properly and adequately filled up. In the desolation of our bereavement we are ready to say—

> 'Take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again.'

We forget that each age has its new demands—that the resources of the Almighty are not easily exhausted, and that when He has any special work He has in store a special man to do it.

¶ When Dr. Jabez Bunting, one of the greatest of Wesley's followers, passed away, a minister of the denomination preached his funeral sermon, and closed a glowing peroration by saying, 'When Bunting died, the sun of Methodism set,' and a plain man in the congregation immediately shouted, 'Glory be to God, that's a lie.' The expression of the irrepressible peasant was more forceful than reverent, but his sentiment was more God-honouring than that of the pessimistic preacher. The Church of Jesus Christ is not dependent upon any minister or layman, however influential. God is our Sun, and whilst men die He lives for ever.[1]

¶ In Westminster Abbey there is a marble tablet containing the medallion portraits of the two Wesleys combined, and underneath is the inscription—

> 'God buries the workers but carries on the work.'[2]

2. Yet God has more concern for the worker than for the work. No chance threw Joshua in the way. He had been 'Moses' minister'; he had been at the same time the servant of God. And when the work was ready for him, God had him ready for the work.

(1) He had already furnished proofs of his courage and fidelity. He had shown these virtues in the manner in which he discharged his duty of exploring a hostile country, and also in withstanding the advice of the ten spies at the risk of his own life. He had distinguished himself at an even earlier period, when the Israelites had been in the desert only seven days. Encamped at Rephidim, they were attacked by a tribe of the Amalekites. Moses was on the hill praying, with Aaron and Hur holding up his hands in earnest intercession; Joshua was on the plain fighting the enemy, and with a select body of men he routed their whole army. On that occasion he displayed the skill and bravery of a true general, and it is in that battle we have our earliest glimpse of him.

(2) He took an intense interest in God's House. He is supposed to have been the custodian of the Tabernacle, and, like Samuel, abode either in it or near it. Whether that was so or not, he was fervent in his attachment and diligent in his attendance. It is a beautiful trait in his character, and an index of the reality and depth of his religious earnestness. 'And he [Moses] turned again into the camp: but his minister Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the Tent.'

(3) He had enjoyed close and tender friendship with Moses. It is impossible to associate with a lofty nature and not acquire in time

[1] *The Life of D. L. Moody*, 421.

[1] E. Morgan.
[2] *Ibid.*

some of its nobler and finer instincts. Many a young preacher has received unspeakable advantage from his association as colleague with some venerable and eminent minister. Elisha must have been all the better prepared for his work by his fellowship with Elijah, and Joshua must have derived lifelong benefit from his intimacy with Moses. If an illustrious personage makes his mark upon the age in which he lives, and his influence is felt more or less by all his contemporaries, it is quite obvious that those who are admitted into the inner circle of his life must be conscious in a pre-eminent degree of the spell of his saintliness and the magnetism of his genius. They can say

We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Caught his clear accents, learnt his great language,
Made him our pattern to live and to die.

(4) And now he was encouraged to undertake the work by a distinct promise of Divine direction and guardianship. It is interesting to observe that the assurance of Divine guidance and protection given to Joshua, and recorded in the first chapter of this Book, is largely a literal repetition of that given to Moses, as recorded in Deut. xi. 24, 25. Nothing could be more explicit and cheering than the declaration, 'As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.' Whatever courage Joshua displayed, and whatever success he achieved, this was the secret—God was to him no distant shadow, but an ever-present and luminous reality, and the companionship of the Divine Being was the fountain of his inspiration and heroism.

¶ The late Mr. Collier, of Manchester Mission fame, on one occasion wrote to his wife:—I've a lot to think about just now and feel the responsibility more than I sometimes care to say. If I could not say, 'I believe in God, *the Father* Almighty,' and realize the truth of His guidance, care, and over-ruling Providence, I should not dare to go on with my work. Christian work is not easier, conditions of the people are perplexing, one's own life grows in bigness and responsibility, and one feels more what it means to live as one gets older. I remember always the Master's answer to His perplexed disciples, *Have faith in God.*[1]

## The Charter of the Second Rate.

Josh. i. 2.—'Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan.'

'Moses my servant is dead.' The rest of history might well appear to be an anticlimax. 'Moses my servant is dead'; nothing now remains but for someone to write his biography. With a quietness and confidence and an unswerving purpose which must have made Joshua realize that the history of the world was truly in God's hands, the word came to him to go right ahead and do something which even Moses had not been able to do. 'Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.' It was the charter of the second-rate man. It was the Divine proclamation to the world that God can carry out His plans even when the big men have disappeared.

1. We have been told often enough that the age of great men is past, that neither in Church nor in State are there the leaders to compare with the men of old. 'Moses is dead.' So be it. It is probably all true enough. But read on. This Book is not the book of Moses, but the Book of God. 'Moses my servant is dead; now, therefore arise, go over this Jordan, *thou.*' I am not surprised that Joshua required special encouragement; that three times over in one chapter he had to be told to 'be strong and of a good courage.' But he went on, he and the people under him—and they got over this Jordan and entered upon their great heritage.

'Moses is dead'—Moses who staggered Pharaoh and outwitted all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Behind us all lies a great and glorious past. The close of the Book of Deuteronomy is like the end of one epoch, and

[1] *Collier of Manchester*, 165.

the opening of the Book of Joshua is like the beginning of another. We know what the past has held, and in view of what we have lost we need all the encouragement we can get to enter upon the almost insurmountable tasks which confront us. If it took the great men of old all their time to accomplish what they did, how are we lesser men going to fare in the far more difficult problems we are facing now? And just because God was in this thing, there came to Joshua, right out of the most depressing thought that could visit him, the summons to arise and be doing. 'Moses is dead'—and before the fateful words have time to sap his energy or dim his eye or paralyse his mind there springs out of them the call to a forward movement, 'now therefore arise, go over Jordan, thou, and all this people.'

A Cabinet Minister was telling us lately that if we realized the situation which confronts us all in Europe we should not be able to sleep. I believe it. I also believe that if Joshua and the people under him had realized all that would befall them once they crossed the Jordan, they would not have taken one step. But this Book is the story of people who never crossed their Rubicons or Jordans alone. From Genesis to Revelation you have the story of people who did impossible things through the might of the Unseen Helper who went before them. As Florence Cortis-Stanford puts it:

You cannot see Him? No?
Yet lo!
The blue sea-water laughs and croons
And dances in an ecstasy of light,
Straining to cast a shadow of His might.

You cannot hear Him? No?
But lo!
The lazy wind still wanders by
All heavy with the fragrance of His breath
Who stands e'en now betwixt thy soul and death.

You do not know Him? No?
Yet lo!
Your restless eyes all weary seek
And fain, so fain, at peace would be.
Hold fast thy longing—fast! for that is He.

2. Look at the spaciousness of the life that is content to be led forth by God into the unknown. 'From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border.' Great river, great sea—there is a spaciousness which comes into the life that is content to be led of God. Those people who went forward with God were to possess a land which was bordered only by the great sea toward the going down of the sun. Isn't it Life and its conquest? Onwards with God toward the brightening west, till in the great ocean of His love we lose ourselves in heaven above. But all through it is courage, courage, courage; go in and possess. Difficulties—yes. Dangers—yes. Weariness—yes. But certain possession and the sea of God's love to bound and border us.

The most critical time in the life of the first disciples was that night when their Lord was leaving them, and they were going forth into a dark and difficult unknown, the world's blackest hour. And Jesus said to them, as they were all thinking of the long, lonely road that stretched out before them, which they must tread, 'I am the Way.' He did not say, 'I am the Goal.' There would have been truth in such a statement, but not comfort. On which great distinction the spiritual genius of Alice Meynell has seized and clung.

Thou art the Way.
Hadst Thou been nothing but the goal,
I cannot say
If Thou hadst ever met my soul.

I cannot see—
I, child of process—if there lies
An end for me,
Full of repose, full of replies.

I'll not reproach
The road that winds, my feet that err.
Access, approach
Art Thou, Time, Way, and Wayfarer.

'Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise' because Christ lives.[1]

[1] H. L. Simpson, *Put Forth by the Moon*, 807.

## Untrodden Ground.

Josh. 1, 2.—'Arise, go over this Jordan.'

Moses was dead; the great lawgiver and leader was gone; the head and the hand upon which Joshua and all the people were accustomed to lean could be leant upon no longer; the Jordan had not been passed; the Promised Land had not yet been reached. Nevertheless the words of promise remained. Moses had left his people with the language of confidence and exultation upon his lips—'The eternal God is thy refuge'—these were some of the words of his parting blessing—'and underneath are the everlasting arms; . . . Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; . . . happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!' Parting words such as these would be a great support; the spirit of Moses would still be present, though Moses himself was gone. And so the history seems to flow on in its natural channel when we find the Book of Joshua commencing with the message, 'Moses, my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan!'

Christianity has plenty of untrodden ground before her; it is not all mist and doubt around us; we can see already many points where new victories may be expected and won. We have misused Christianity, we have neglected, and often been untrue to, her first principles, and negligent in using the powers she has given us. We have, as a nation, as individuals, been too often Christian only in name, and known but little of true Christian life and power. Too many of us have rested in an idle security which has provoked attack; we have known rightly that God was with us; but we have forgotten the law of His presence and support: 'to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.'

1. What is the intellectual condition of thousands of nominal Christians? Is there no untrodden ground? Is it all mist and doubt round us? Do we not see, only too plainly, masses of needless ignorance—untrained, undeveloped faculties? It is not true that Christianity has been tried by the masses of the people and found wanting, used, and exhausted. The masses, even of our own countrymen, are not so correctly spoken of as lost to Christianity as unreached by it, neither is the rejection, so far as it is rejection, the verdict of disciplined reason, but the sway of passion. Anyone who studies the popular speeches of the day and the unprincipled eloquence of many papers will soon see how far even a rejection by the masses could be regarded as a verdict from first principles and reason.

¶ The superficial scepticism which is so largely ethical, or the result of indifference, and which is assumed by many men in England, has no hold at the Front. One of our best known Bishops was telling me when I met him 'somewhere in France' that a short time back he was about to conduct a service in a hospital ward in his own city, and upon handing a hymnbook to one of the patients lying in bed, he was met with, 'Thank you, I would rather not, I am an agnostic.' Hearing this, the man in the next bed raised himself up on his elbow, and looking at the objector, tersely remarked, 'You silly young fool, a week at the trenches would take that nonsense out of you.'[1]

2. If there is uncultivated ground around us in the region of the intellect, not less so is there in that of morals. It may be our own fault in a large degree, but the fact cannot be denied, that we are surrounded by wild tracts of needless immorality. All ranks of society, in different ways, must plead guilty here; nay, we each know it in our own lives; we might have been much better than we are. We do not say that all doubt or unbelief is the result of sin, but as Christians most of us have no grounds for saying that Christianity has failed to give us all the light it promises, if we consider the conditions of spiritual sight. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' The thinly varnished paganism of many in the educated classes, the almost inextricable confusion of commercial morality, the thoughtless, habitual immoralities of the masses—all this, sad as it is, affords ground

[1] E. J. Kennedy, *With the Immortal Seventh Division*, 151.

of hope for the faithful Christian. Christianity need not be, as some would depict her, sitting disconsolate on the edge of a worked-out mine, conscious that her treasures are exhausted, dreaming of suicide. If she is true to her own principles, and not deluded to adopt the methods of the world, she may be humbled for a time, but she ought to be full of courage and of hope. The world is not in a condition to say that she does not correspond to the needs of perfected humanity. And if this is so of England and of the other lands where Christianity has nominally held sway—if we ought not to give up the battle because there are numbers who have never been enlisted in her ranks or trained in the use of the weapons of her warfare—what shall we say of heathen lands? It is too early to say that Christianity has failed to satisfy the wants of perfect humanity, when as yet only one-third of the human race is Christian even in name. The work of Joshua was to conquer the whole land. Our Jesus is the one Saviour for all the world; He is the new head of humanity, not of England, or of present Christendom only, but of all the world. All the aimless self-denial of the Buddhist, all the Pantheistic yearning of the Brahmin, all the loveless theism of the Muhammadan, all the blind groping of the wild and unlettered savage, will find their real rest and satisfaction in Him.

¶ The apostles of Jesus have travelled the world over making Him known, with strange results. The Jesus of the Western missionary was, naturally, 'the lean and strenuous personality' of the Western ideal. He lived the common life. He was active, practical, constructive. He laid emphasis upon a resolute and fruitful repentance and rectitude of life. The teaching was based upon the Gospels and was true. But (*e.g.*) in India there emerges a Jesus of long silence and patience and serenity, of a forty days' fast and retreat, of long nights spent in solitary contemplation among the lonely hills, of a mystic vision of life, of wandering days, and of a detached interior life amid a crowd of men. The 'oriental Jesus' was found in the Gospels and was true. Montefiore and Zangwill find an Israelitish Jesus; China is finding a Chinese Jesus; Africa will find an African Jesus; he compels consciousness of kinship everywhere. But every local Jesus is an incomplete Jesus, for there is no schism in his nature, he is one and undivided, he is all mankind—and all womankind—the centre and uniting link of our racial unity.

As he travels from continent to continent his mind becomes the final mind. He silently forms the ideal public opinion, social and moral. Those who bear his name are judged with accuracy by his standards. For in him are found blended and balanced and perfected all those elements of character which are instinctively recognized to be the truly human.[1]

## God's Offer, Man's Entrance.

Josh. i. 3.—'Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.'

HERE is a great promise with a sharp limitation. Israel stands at the entrance of Canaan, surveying the great unconquered territory, and wondering how large their possessions were to be. Through Joshua comes the Divine promise: 'Every place is yours—but every place only as you tread upon it, occupy, subdue, possess it.'

¶ A most instructive parallel might be drawn between the subjugation of Palestine by Israel and the settlement of America by the English. In both cases tyranny at home had much to do with the movement, for the Stuarts of England and the Pharaohs of Egypt held essentially the same views of royal prerogative. In both cases the country was already occupied by aborigines, and the free wild life of the Jebusites and the Amorites was not unlike that of the Iroquois and Sioux Indians. In both cases the land was parcelled out before it was actually possessed. In both cases possession was achieved only through long and obstinate struggle with an enemy continually defeated, but stubbornly refusing to submit. According to the royal grants, Massachusetts and Virginia reached through to the Pacific Ocean. It required five minutes to draw the long

[1] A. H. Small, *The Kingdom and the King*, 77.

parallels on the royal map; it needed two centuries actually to push civilization across the continent, and the work is not yet finished.

1. The Divine giving is always done along this line. The giving of Palestine is a sample of all God's bestowal. He does not overwhelm us in wholesale blessing and pour out possessions as men dump loads of coal into our cellars. In dealing with the fields and the forests, God pours out sunshine and rain unasked, and the earth can only lie helpless, now flooded, and now parched with heat. But in dealing with men made in His image, God's giving is a far finer and more subtle process. There is in it a wondrous delicacy that seems to fear refusal; that is busied chiefly with finding a place in which the gift is wanted. He gives us the title-deed, the motive-power, the strength, the gladness, and then says: 'Enter and possess.' He put Adam into the garden to dress and to keep it, and the great gift of Paradise was only the bestowal of a place to work in.

We are all familiar with this truth in the intellectual realm. You put into your son's hand a Virgil or a Shakespeare. 'Now,' you say, 'he has the works of Shakespeare, of Virgil.' Has he? He has the possibility, the opportunity! It is a great thing to have that; thousands have remained ignorant for want of that. But when you possess an author, the book in the hand will be only a subordinate affair. You will know the man himself, lines will flash out upon you at your toil, great sweet thoughts will recur in dreams, passages will intertwine with all your daily task, and when you possess Shakespeare, he will possess you.

So Christ comes to a man at the entrance of the Christian life, and puts him into ownership. 'As many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' He bestows upon us the title-deeds unencumbered. He spreads before us a great territory and says: 'That is yours.' Forgiveness for sins that are past, a peace above all earthly dignities, an inner quietness which nought can ruffle, a balm for life's hurts and bruises, a daily strength for daily needs, a courage that rises with obstacles and never knows defeat—all this is ours, if we will make it ours. Ours to possess, to enjoy, to experience.

¶ There is an old-fashioned phrase that had a deal of truth in it—'experiencing religion.' A man has just as much religion as he has experienced; only when talking of our experience, let us not go back twenty years, let us review the last twenty-four hours. How was it with me last evening? Was God last night in my soul, was I filled with serenity and courage and devotion to other souls, not twenty years ago, but last night? Or was I full of heartburning and envy of my richer neighbours, and of the wrath of wounded pride, and of small disquieting jealousies which eat out the heart like a canker? How is it this morning? Am I in church because I am hungry for God, or because sitting in a pew for an hour and a half is an essential of respectability? No putting of names on the church-roll, or hanging texts on the wall, or renting of pews is 'experiencing' religion. Christianity by proxy is impossible.[1]

2. 'Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon'—surely there is a hint here of the slow and toilsome process of spiritual acquisition. There were no express trains from Egypt to Canaan; it was one foot up and the other foot down, all the way. There was no high road through the shifting sands, and no suspension bridge over Jordan. Sometimes footsore, sometimes weary, they marched over Palestine, and only what they marched over did they possess. For this reason the Christian life is so often spoken of in the Bible as a walk. 'We walk by faith,' says Paul; and it takes a great deal of faith simply to walk. 'They shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint'—so reads the promise, and you notice the walking comes after the running, as if it were the greater and higher achievement. 'Ye did run well,' says Paul to the Galatians; but, like many other runners, they had not learned to walk patiently and persistently. A few miles each day, and no carriage for anybody—that is the journey that lies before us. When you see in the bookstore a publication labelled 'French at Sight,'

[1] W. H. D. Faunce.

you know that sort of French is not worth having. Christianity at sight is always a delusion. At sight of Jesus we are indeed ushered into a new relation and position. But then comes the path, sometimes winding through the shadow, sometimes leading straight up-hill, always leading heavenward and always bright with an unseen Friend.

So it is with the entire advance of the Church of Jesus Christ. Sometimes when we are impatient and fretful let us remember that here, too, walking is the normal movement. That great movements should pace so slowly, and the advance be so measured and unequal, seems to us incomprehensible. Even the sun seems prosaic to our feverishness, and we are eager for comets and shooting stars. Some of us have seen a great city as it has grown. Step by step the great city crept onward, transforming the vacant lots one by one, blasting out great rocks, laying foundations, erecting buildings, creeping first up the east side, now up the west, moving steadily as the tide and quite as irresistible, travelling step by step, keeping every foot of land gained, and then gaining more in marvellous fashion. So God's kingdom grows—

Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.

3. One other suggestion is here—a hint that the farther a man travels the richer he becomes. To grow older is to accumulate territory, to lay up treasure. We pass onward not as the steamer that churns up the salt water and then throws it out again, leaving it the same barren, bitter waste; we possess what we cross; we are part of all that we have met. Mountain range or lowly valley, forest or verdant meadow, whatsoever experience of God's love and grace we pass through, that is ours for ever. We learn more of man's weakness but more of God's power, and the more we truly know the gladder shall we really be. New experiences are to be ours, and the best is yet to come. For him who truly lives with God, each day begins with a sunrise, and every night is radiant with moving stars. Experience of the world only gives such a man more persistent, unfaltering faith, and all that he has conquered of peace, and joy, and strength is his for ever.

Experience bows a sweet contented face,
  Still setting to her seal that God is true:
  Beneath the sun, she knows, is nothing new;
All things that go return with measured pace,
Winds, rivers, man's still recommencing race:—
  While Hope beyond earth's circle strains her view,
  Past sun and moon, and rain and rainbow too,
Enamoured of unseen eternal grace.
Experience saith, 'My God doth all things well':
  And for the morrow taketh little care,
    Such peace and patience garrison her soul:—
  While Hope, who never yet hath eyed the goal,
  With arms flung forth, and backward floating hair,
Touches, embraces, hugs the invisible.[1]

## The Limits.

Josh. i. 4.—'From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border.'

These are the limits of the Land of Promise. Can we lay them down upon the map? Can we give the sum of the Land's extent in square miles? We are not asked to do so. We are not expected to do so. The Bible is a book of large conceptions. It is as composite and many-sided as is life itself. It appeals to the understanding as well as to the imagination—to the heart as well as to the intellect. Here, in our text, the sacred historian might have given the extent of the land of Canaan in more precise figures, but it is more in harmony with the character and genius of the book that the possession upon which the children of Israel were about to enter should be spoken of as extending 'from the great river, the river Euphrates, unto the great sea toward the going

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

down of the sun.' These are the limits of the illimitable.

1. The great truths with which the Bible has familiarized us—Revelation, Inspiration, Incarnation, Creed, Conduct, Destiny—are all illimitable in their character and extent. Like the stars, they belong to the realm of the Infinite. Like the mountains, they have their foundations far out of sight, and their summits high above the clouds. Hence the truths of the Word of God in appealing to the human mind transcend the powers of thought, and he who seeks to become acquainted with those truths must be prepared, in Tennyson's metaphor—

> To follow knowledge like a sinking star
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

The Bible itself never seems to lose sight of this attribute of illimitableness as applied to the truths with which it deals. It has no such thing as a 'scientific frontier.' It has no hard-and-fast lines, no formal proofs and exact definitions. Its truths are taught not by syllogism, but by hints and suggestions, by analogies and comparisons, by fragments of history and biography, by elaborate poems and exquisite parables, informally and unscientifically.

It is well to remember that the moral and spiritual truths of God's Word are independent of their theological presentation. Theologies change: truths remain. The more definite in outline and the more positive in statement our theologies are, the more likely are they to require re-adjustment and modification as time goes on and as 'knowledge grows from more to more.' The word 'unsettlement' is in the air. Everything is in a state of transition. But the unsettlement of theology is not necessarily the same thing as the unsettlement of faith, and if only our faith rests upon the rock of truth rather than upon some method of its statement we shall not be likely to suffer any serious disturbance. Theological science is in a state of perturbation; and there are some theologians who are like Nansen when he lighted on the ice-floes off the coast of Greenland because the ship could not get nearer land, and when he made his way as best he could from floe to floe with numerous drenchings and submergings until at last the shore was reached. But, whatever unsettlement there may be in the theological world to-day, there is no unsettlement, or at least there need be none, in regard to the *moral* contents, and the *moral* efficacy of God's Word, and the power of that Word as a great spiritual force to retain its hold upon the intellect and heart of the community. 'The Bible owes its place in the world to-day,' as Emerson reminds us, 'not to miracles, but to the fact that it comes from a profounder depth of thought than any other book.'

¶ It was said of the late Professor Hort that 'he was always on the look-out for fresh truths, and for new ways of interpreting men and things,' and that is the only possible attitude for a thoughtful believer to take up. The final word upon any important subject has not been spoken. There is more light yet to shine from the Word of God. We belong to the domain of truth. We have our feet firmly planted upon the Rock. We know whom we have believed—and yet we are always on the look-out for fresh truths, for new developments, for larger and more extended horizons.

One hears a whisper sometimes that some of our brethren have ceased to grow. They have arrived at the conclusion that they cannot, by taking thought, add to their stature. They have a number of books on their study shelves which they call 'standard'—and it is to be presumed that in their earlier days they did some reading. But for twenty years now and more they have not added a new book to their collection, nor a new idea to their repertory. So far as their thinking is concerned they have reached 'Land's End.' They have pronounced their final intellectual 'Amen.' They are pillars of unquestioned orthodoxy. They are absolutely sound in the faith—sound asleep![1]

2. As in theology so in religion. The thoughts of God in the sphere of redemption and practical godliness are all transcendently great.

[1] T. Sanderson.

The 'peace of God' of which the New Testament speaks is a peace which 'passeth all understanding.' The 'love' of which it speaks 'passeth knowledge.' The 'gift' to which it refers is said to be 'unspeakable.' Peace, love, life, all too vast for thought, too deep for words!

Surely it was to the coming of Christ as the Incarnate Word, bringing with Him those larger conceptions of Divine things, that the prophet referred when he said, 'Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold a far stretching land'—or, as it is more practically rendered in the margin, 'the land of far distances.' Is not that an apt and exquisitely beautiful description of the kingship and kingdom of the truth as revealed in the character and utterances of Jesus? 'A land of far distances.' The truths of God as taught by Christ are vast, immeasurable, infinite. They extend 'from the great river, the river Euphrates, . . . unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun.'

'Religion,' a thoughtful writer has observed, 'is not only a straight path of obedience—it is also a boundless prospect and delight beyond the heart of man to conceive.' That is a saying which is worthy of being printed in letters of gold. It is an aspect of religion which is too much overlooked by us. So far from being an irksome and elaborate system of rules and regulations, the religion of the New Testament is a 'boundless prospect and delight,' filling the beholder with irrepressible gladness.

(1) Think of the grace of *forgiveness.* There are those who speak of the Divine forgiveness, based upon the sacrifice of Christ, as if it were an exact equivalent for the guilt which is cancelled—so much grace for so much guilt. But the forgiving mercy of God is more than commensurate with man's sin. The Psalmist is nearer the mark when, in anticipation of the gospel day, he says, 'As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.' That is the immeasurable measurement of the Divine forgiveness—high as the heavens above the earth, and as far as the east is from the west toward the going down of the sun.

Ah, yet I say unto all that have sinned,
East and West and South and North
The wings of my measureless love go forth
To cover you all: they are free as the wings
of the wind.[1]

(2) Think of the grace of *the perfected life.* By far the most effectual exponent of gospel teaching is the Apostle Paul, whose writings abound in great conceptions, so that in reading the Pauline Epistles we feel as though we were walking in 'big latitudes.' There is nothing puny in Paul's conception or treatment of the great Christian verities. His intellectual grasp is so strong, his eagle glance is so penetrating, his thoughts breathe and burn with such an intense emotion! He has much to say on the subject of the justification of the sinner, and yet he treats that tremendous truth merely as a preliminary stage or platform upon which to superinduce other equally great and important truths. His teaching in reference to the new life and the saintly character rises in conception and in sublimity, like some mountain range the summits of which are lost among the clouds. He tells us that 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' He is not concerned with the negative aspects of truth merely, but he shows us, as no other writer does, that the ladder which reaches down to the depths is the ladder which reaches up to the heights, and that the Arm which plucks us out of the abysmal pit is the Arm which enthrones us at the right hand of God.

In the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans the writer uses that peculiarly Pauline phrase, *How much more,* no fewer than five times. He shows that he is capable of broad inferences and of magnificent deductions. His argument in one place is this: that if God is capable of doing so much for us whilst we are in a state of enmity, what is He not capable of doing for us when our enmity shall

[1] Alfred Noyes.

have become subdued? If Christ on the cross is able to accomplish so much for us in the way of reconciliation, what is He not capable of accomplishing for us now that He sits, in His mediatorial might, at the right hand of God?

¶ I remember reading in Mrs. Oliphant's 'Life of Edward Irving,' that when Irving commenced his ministry he resolved that he would 'demonstrate a higher style of Christianity, something more magnanimous, more heroical, than the age was accustomed to.' 'A higher style of Christianity'—is not that the great need of the Church and of the world to-day? Everywhere we are surrounded by low thoughts, low aims, low pursuits, mediocre attainments. On every side there is the dwarfing and the dwindling of great ideals. Assuredly the great need on the part of those who recognize the greatness of their heritage in this Sacred Book is a stronger faith in God based upon a larger and a grander conception of the purposes of God in Jesus Christ.[1]

## Strength.

Josh. i. 6.—'Be strong.'

1. There was need for such an exhortation. Joshua could look back through the whole of the forty years' wandering in the wilderness. He had known the behaviour of the Israelites all that time—their perverseness, the rebellions they had attempted, the little effect which either punishment or kindness had had in subduing their stubbornness and murmurings, the constant trouble and anxiety which they caused to Moses, the little heed which they gave even to God. All this lay in the memory of the past, and was not calculated to make him hopeful. He had to deal with the same people. It was a reasonable presumption that much of the same character and disposition was still left in them. It needed a strong and resolute spirit to grapple with such a body of men.

(1) What was the prospect immediately before him? Jordan—not a large river under ordinary circumstances, but a very rapid one, full of eddies and deep and dangerous pools—now swollen far beyond its usual limits by the melting of the snows in its upper courses. God had manifested His power and His goodness forty years before by making a path through the waters of the Red Sea. Would He exert His power in like manner, or would He leave the people to their own resources? There was anxiety in the thought, How would that rushing stream be crossed?

(2) There was also plenty to make a leader anxious in the prospect of the work that lay before him on the farther side. Many powerful peoples, the various nations of Canaan, fierce and warlike, were armed and ready to stop the entrance of this new claimant to the possession of their land. There were cities strongly fortified—one immediately in front of him, the royal city of Jericho. There were mountain fortresses—strongholds which might defy almost any power in those days. There were large bodies of horsemen—chariots—all the various appliances for attack or defence which men had invented in those days, while Israel had nothing of the kind. Surely, in view of the difficulties which lay before him and with the remembrance of what had happened in the past, Joshua needed greatly to be strong and of a good courage. Faintheartedness would have shrunk from the work, and perhaps never have brought it to completion.

2. What were the sources of Joshua's strength?

(1) *A faithful past.*—'After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' minister.' In Joshua's case, as always, the eternal rule held good, that faithfulness in a few things is the condition of rule over many things; and the loyalty of a servant is the stepping-stone to the royalty of the throne. The previous years of Joshua's life had been full of high and noble endeavour. For forty years, if Josephus be correct in his statement as to his age at the death of Moses, he shared the slavery and sorrows of a captive race. His childish eyes must have witnessed the brutality of the Egyptian taskmasters, even if his own shoulders were not torn by their cruel whips. As a scion of one of the leading families of Ephraim (Num. xiii. 8, 16), he may have taken some leading part in the marshalling of the

[1] T. Sanderson.

Exodus, and there approved himself as worthy of all trust. His conflict with Amalek; his good report of the Land of Promise; his refusal to take any part in the disastrous attack on the Canaanites; his eagerness for the good name and fame of Moses; his patient endurance of the weary years of wandering—all prove that his was no common character. The aloe blooms but once in a hundred years; but every hour of all that century is needed to produce the delicate texture and resplendent beauty of the flower. The deed of a Grace Darling is not the sudden outburst of the moment that gives it birth, but the result of long years of self-discipline, courage, and ministry to others. And this summons of Joshua to the leader's place in Israel was the guerdon of more than eighty years of faithful service.

(2) *A distinct call.*—'Arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them. . . . Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them.' When a man knows that he has been called to do a certain work, he is invincible. He is not unconscious of his own deficiencies, whether they be natural or intellectual. He is not insensible of difficulty; none so quick as he to see the great stones, the iron gates, the walled cities, the broad and flowing rivers; he is not invulnerable to the shafts of ridicule and adverse criticism; but from all these he looks steadily away to the declared purpose of God, and yields himself to be the channel through which it may operate. The supreme inquiry for each of us, when summoned to a new work, is—not whether we possess sufficient strength or qualification for it, but—if we have been called to it of God; and when that is so there is no further cause for anxiety. If it is in His plan that we should march through a river, or attack a walled town, or turn to flight an army, we have simply to go forward. He will make the mountains a way. Rivers will dry up; walls will fall down; armies will be scattered. There is no such thing as impossibility when God says, 'Forward! Arise, go over this Jordan.'

¶ The day after, the weather becoming tempestuous, his brethren sorrowfully and reluctantly left him to prosecute his voyage alone. Before they parted, however, they spent the whole morning (to use his own words) in a Divine ordinance, in which each of them read a portion of Scripture, and all of them sang and prayed. 'Mr. Brown's passage, chosen from the 1st of Joshua, was very suitable,' said Mr. Martyn, 'Have I not sent thee? Let this be an answer to my fears, O my Lord, and an assurance that I am in Thy work; and that therefore I shall not go forth at my own charges, or fight any enemies but Thine. It was a very affecting session to me.' [1]

(3) *The sense of God's presence.*—'As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.' All through the arduous campaign that followed, nothing could daunt Joshua's courage whilst that assurance was ever ringing in his memory: 'I will be with thee.' It is well when we can so encourage ourselves in God! The fire is heated seven times; but He is with me, and no smell of fire shall pass upon my flesh. The river is deep; but He is with me, and its waters shall not sweep me off my feet. Mine enemies are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred; but He is with me, and no weapon that is forged against me shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise in judgment against me He will condemn. Who can wax faint-hearted whilst He holds the right hand, saying, 'Fear not, I am with thee!'

¶ I climbed into the tree, and was left there alone in the bush. The hours I spent there live all before me as if it were but of yesterday. I heard the frequent discharging of muskets, and the yells of the savages. Yet I sat there among the branches, as safe in the arms of Jesus! Never, in all my sorrows, did my Lord draw nearer to me, and speak more soothingly in my soul, than when the moonlight flickered among these chestnut leaves, and the night air played on my throbbing brow, as I told all my heart to Jesus. Alone, yet not alone! If it be to glorify my God, I will not grudge to spend many nights alone in such a tree, to feel again my Saviour's

[1] H. Martyn, *Life and Letters*, 159.

spiritual presence, to enjoy His consoling fellowship.[1]

(4) *The indwelling of God's Word.*—'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.' Words pass on to men the heroic thoughts which thrilled the souls of those who spoke them first. There are words, as there are strains of music, which cannot be uttered without nerving men to dare and do, to attempt and achieve. A woman will be strong to wait and suffer for long years in the strength of a sentence spoken by her lover as he parted from her. An army has before now forgotten sleepless nights and hungry marches in the stirring harangue of its general. And is not this what the prophet meant when he said, 'Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart'; and what Jesus meant when He said, 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life'?

We must meditate on the words of God, because it is through the Word of God that the Spirit of God comes in fullness to be the mighty occupant of our inner man. This, after all, is the secret of strength—to be possessed of the strong Son of God, strengthened by His indwelling might, and filled by His Spirit.

¶ I am afraid that the practice of such meditation as is meant here has come to be, like the art of making ecclesiastical stained glass, almost extinct in modern times. You have all so many newspapers and magazines to read that the Bible has a chance of being shoved out of sight, except on Sundays and in chapels. The 'meditating' that is enjoined . . . is no mere intellectual study of Scripture, either from an antiquarian or a literary or a theological point of view, but it is the mastering of the principles of conduct as laid down there, and the appropriating of all the power for guidance and for sustaining which that word of the Lord gives. Meditation, the familiarizing ourselves with the ethics of Scripture, and with the hopes and powers that are treasured in Jesus Christ, so that our minds are made up upon a great many thorny questions as to what we ought to do, and that when crises or dangers come, as they have a knack of coming, very suddenly, and are sprung upon us unexpectedly, we shall be able, without much difficulty, or much time spent in perplexed searching, to fall back upon the principles that decide our conduct—that is essential to all successful and victorious Christian life.

And it is the secret of all blessed Christian life. For there is a lovely echo of these vigorous words of command to Joshua in a very much more peaceful form in the 1st Psalm: 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, . . . but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night'—the very words that are employed in the text to describe the duty of the soldier—therefore 'all that he doeth shall prosper.'[1]

[1] *John G. Paton*, i. 324.

## Good Success.

Josh. i. 8.—'Then thou shalt have good success.'

'Good success'—what does that mean? Does it imply that there is a kind of success which is not good? Certainly there is such a thing; there are forms of success which strike the vulgar eye, but which are spurious. But what is good success? What are the elements of that success which entitles a man to be called happy by good judges, and entitles a man in his best moments to be satisfied with his own life? To find out this is to find out what should be a young man's ideal, for his ideal may be nothing else but to live so that in the best and truest sense his life is a success.

1. There are those who regard success as the highest good, the worthiest aim in life. There are those to whom the inexcusable offence is to fail. And it is, if we rightly define the word. To succeed is the *summum bonum*, if we do not misunderstand the word. Just here is the trouble. There is confusion as to the real meaning of success and failure. We overlook a fact intimated in this text in the apparent tautology of the phrase, 'good

[1] A. Maclaren.

success.' It would appear that success is not always successful, and that failure does not always fail.

We have been deceived by that popular sophism, 'Nothing succeeds like success.' Who first uttered that fallacy we have never taken the trouble to inquire. Certainly no wise man ever said it. Certainly no good man ever said it. And if he who invented the saying was neither wise nor good, the sooner we forget it the better—the better for us, and the better for the world. The plain truth is that nothing succeeds like what the world sometimes brands as failure; and nothing fails so miserably, so totally, so fatally, as what the world sometimes calls success. The confusion arises from a double standard of success.

(1) According to human judgment, they succeed who reach the end at which they aim. The rich merchant, the popular politician, the promoted captain, the famous orator, the victorious athlete—these succeed, for they lay hold on the prize for which they strove. Whether the prize is worth striving for is quite another consideration. What if the merchant builds his palace at the expense of his soul? What if the politician purchases his power by judicious silence? What if the captain ascends the throne of power over the ruin of hundreds of his peers? What if the orator lowers the tone of his gospel to tickle the itching ears of the mob? What if the runner or wrestler, in his development of the animal, ignores the spiritual? All this is nothing—they have succeeded!

(2) But there is another standard, judged by which they alone succeed who have a worthy aim. In the one case the action is judged by reference to the end; in the other, by reference to the purpose, the motive, the aspiration. Anything succeeds in so far as it does what it was designed by its maker to do. An axe is a success if it cuts. A clock is a success if it keeps time. If the axe is not well tempered, if it loses its edge with the first stroke, it fails as an axe. It may yet be a good hammer, or, separated from its handle, it may serve as a paper weight; but it is a poor axe. And if the clock cannot be regulated, if it is unreliable, if we cannot trust it to tell us the hour and the minute, however beautiful it may be as an ornament, it has failed as a clock.

2. Apply this to human life. What is life for? What did God intend to make when man walked out from His finished thought? The question is not, Can we acquire wealth? We can if we will to do it. The question is not, Can we reach the summit of yonder hill? We can if we will to do it. The question is, What did the Creative Power put us here to do? That is for us to discover, and that is for us to do. If He wants us to be builders, we will build. If He wants us to spin, we will spin. If God wants us to weave, we will weave. The bee will teach us to build, the spider to spin, the worm to weave. If God wants us to be mere machines, He will reduce our lives to mechanical forces. But if He wants us to make the utmost of our highest faculties, to cultivate patience, and courage, and self-denial, and reverence, and love, we must do that. And if we undertake to do that, we shall find our teacher in a Man who lived a perfect life, and whose life has been recorded for us that we might not fail to make our lives Divine.

3. It follows that no earthly court or committee is competent to say in any case whether the successful man deserves to succeed. There are so many factors of which we have no knowledge. Doubtless, the real victor is often the apparently defeated contestant. Doubtless there are those whom we call moral failures who have struggled more heroically for victory over self and sin than some others who are called saints. The poet is right who intimates that there may be more reverence in some people's honest doubts than in some other people's thoughtless prayers. We fall back for ever upon this assurance, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' He knows how fierce has been the battle, and how faithful the spirit of the man who fails. He knows the fidelity of His servants who fight unseen battles, and perhaps never taste the sweets of victory. He knows the struggle of the conquered, and for ever and for ever He holds out His hand to

the soul in the midst of stress and storm, saying, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'

It is the faithful, not the clever; the faithful, not the brilliant; the faithful, not the successful, who succeed. We are not commanded to keep up with the procession. We are commanded not to depart from 'this book of the law.' We are commanded to 'meditate therein day and night.' We are commanded to keep step with our Leader. And when the march is long and the load heavy He tarries for us. There was one, long ago, who said at the close of his long and burdened life, the end of which, apparently, was an unrelieved tragedy, 'I have fought a good fight . . . I have kept the faith.' That is what changes the whole case. Paul's life was not a tragedy. It was an epic, magnificent and beautiful. No man who fights a good fight ever fails. No man who keeps the faith throws his life away. Earth may take that life and break it, but God takes up the fragments, and lo! in His hands they are a perfect whole.

¶ In God's sight the worth of our life is never the success which it secures, but always the spirit which it puts forth. We are better men if we fail in a high endeavour than if we succeed in a meagre one. The great thing is to be up and doing, to be strengthening the world's hard upward course, and resisting its easy downward course, by the resolute output of faith and effort.[1]

## The Passage of Jordan.

Josh. i. 11.—'Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over Jordan, to go to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.'

We are familiar from our hymns with the use of the passing of the Jordan as a symbol of death. The symbol seems to have been taken from this verse. There is Isaac Watt's hymn—

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain;

There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers:
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.

Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.

The thought of fear in face of death is similarly expressed in the hymn—

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah.

The third verse is—

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's Destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee.

But the most sustained imagery is found in Charles Wesley's hymn,

O glorious hope of perfect love!

where two incidents, Moses viewing the land, and Joshua leading the people into it, are combined, and the thing symbolized is not the death of the body but the death of the soul to sin—

Rejoicing now in earnest hope,
I stand, and from the mountain-top
See all the land below;
Rivers of milk and honey rise,
And all the fruits of paradise
In endless plenty grow.
... ... ... ... ... ...
Now, O my Joshua, bring me in;
Cast out Thy foes; the inbred sin,
The carnal mind, remove;
The purchase of Thy death divide!
Give me with all the sanctified
The heritage of love!

Let us use this symbol of the passing of Jordan by the Israelites for our passing through death into the Land of our inheritance.

1. The first feeling of the Israelites when the order came to pass over must have been one of

[1] Archbishop Lang.

joy and triumph. The possession of that land had been the hope of their lives. It had mingled with their childish recollections, and had been the constant expectation of their manhood—the thought that had lightened their weariness and cheered their toils. The very words of the promise must have made a part of their lives. It was 'the good land,' 'the land flowing with milk and honey,' 'the land which the Lord had promised to their forefathers.' The generation had drunk in the thought of it even from their mothers' breast. Those who had perished in the wilderness were men and women who were more than twenty years old when they came out of Egypt. Those whose feet should press the sacred soil were the children of the Exodus, and had spent the flush and strength of their manhood in the wanderings in the wilderness. And now the end had come. The weary journeys were to cease. The promised rest was at hand, ay, within three days. Think you that they turned away from realizing the hope of their lifetime, and did not welcome it with joy? How strangely unnatural would it have been if they had shrunk from it, and had complained because their inheritance was at hand.

Not less strangely unnatural is the gloom and sadness, the fear and horror, with which Christians too often contemplate their own passage into the heavenly Canaan. Yet we, too, from our earliest infancy have heard and thought of heaven. The joys of the sinless world have mingled with the lispings of our first prayers. Its condition of rapture, unutterable and unmeasurable, has filled our childhood's fancy, fired the imagination of our early years, and occupied the wondering thoughts and reverent conjectures of our riper age. Heaven is the romance of human life; but a romance as real as it is fascinating. The Canaan of the ancient Hebrew was but a scene of change and further conflict—how unlike in this respect to the inheritance 'incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away'!—yet the Hebrew delighted in the thought of it, and that probably for the same reason that makes heaven so sweet to us—the prospect of its rest. It was not only on the contrast between its fountains and fruitfulness and the arid desolation of the great howling wilderness that the thoughts of the Hebrew rested, but on the contrast of its repose. The sorest trial of his life had probably been not the hunger and the thirst, the laborious journey and the tumult of the battle, but the ceaseless motion—the movement ever on and on without apparent reason; the impossibility of settling down anywhere; the seeking, the craving for repose. Rest, rest! rest anywhere, but above all, in the land that flowed with milk and honey, must have been the innermost desire of his heart. Hitherto his life had been a pilgrimage, not a home: Canaan would be home.

¶ One of the most popular poems of our day is *The Isle of Innisfree*. It appeals not only by its magic music, but also through its pictures so full of quiet and rest, and most of all because it sings of that for which our heart so persistently yearns—Peace. For in the days of unrest and noise, the soul yearns for some isle of peace.

> And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow:
> Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
> There midnight's all a-glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
> And evening full of the linnet's wings.

Mr. W. B. Yeats has told us that once in a crowded arcade in London, when jostled by the crowd, he caught sight, in a shop window, of a jet of water which was tossing a celluloid ball up into the air, and when it fell, the water tossed it up again. He looked and thought of other waters—of an Irish lake and a dreamy isle. Then the words beat upon his ears:

> I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree.

Thus the poem was born, and thus swiftly he flew from the arcade to the Isle of Peace. Which things are an allegory.[1]

2. But while the predominant thought in the mind of the Hebrews must have been joy, there must likewise have blended with it a

[1] W. B. Brash, *The Pilgrim's Way*, 84.

great trial of faith. At first, probably, it was Canaan, and only Canaan, that occupied their minds; but after a little while it is scarcely possible that the mode of their entry into Canaan should not have occurred to them. The chosen land was indeed close at hand. It seemed as if they could almost touch the shore. Just beyond gleamed in the sunshine the towers of Jericho, and blue in the distance rose the hills of Judæa. But, close as they seemed, Jordan rolled between, and they could not but ask how they were to cross it. The command itself recalled it to their recollection, for it laid emphasis on the words, 'this Jordan': 'Ye shall pass over this Jordan.' Why this Jordan, but because it was Jordan at the worst, Jordan in flood? The sacred narrative specifies the fact that 'Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest.' It is at all times a difficult military operation to cross a river in the face of a watchful foe; and here it was not an army to be taken across, but a nation, with women and children and a mixed multitude, and all the tents and baggage inseparable from their movements. It is impossible but that many and many a Hebrew, as he watched the strong rushing stream, should have asked the question, How?

Yet the assurance was positive: 'Within three days ye shall pass over'; and is not—faith must have argued—is not the God of the Covenant able to keep His word? Is it not He who divided the Red Sea, and made the deep into dry land? Is it not He who smote Egypt and overthrew Pharaoh and his host? Is it not He who showed His power upon Mount Sinai, at whose word the hard rock gave forth the springing water, and who fed us with angels' food in the wilderness? Is He not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and had He not shown by countless facts of grace that they were His people and His inheritance? Should they not trust Him to help them now, as He had helped them before? Gloriously, we know, God fulfilled His word, and through the depths of Jordan, touched by the sacred feet of them that bore the ark of the covenant, made a way for His ransomed to pass over. Must not the consternation have been great in Jericho, as they watched from their towers the crossing hosts and caught the distant echo of their songs?

What, then, of that other Jordan, which we must all cross? that death we must all die some time or other, and through which alone we can enter into our Canaan? shall that be more fearful to us than Jordan to the Hebrews, when we have the same God to lead us safely through?

¶ Do you remember what Bunyan says of Mr Fearing?—When he was come at the river where was no bridge, there again he was in a heavy case. Now, now, he said, he should be drowned for ever, and so never see that face with comfort, that he had come so many miles to behold.

And here also I took notice of what was very remarkable: the water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in all my life. So he went over at last, not much above wetshod.

3. There was, lastly, an act of preparation needed. 'Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over.' Nor can we doubt that in the immediate prospect of Canaan other preparations were also made. It is true that for forty years their raiment had not waxed old upon the Hebrews; but their equipments must have been worn with long use, and their weapons rusted with exposure. At all events, we cannot doubt that those three days were busy within the camp of Israel, and that hammers must have rung, and busy hands toiled to prepare for the great crisis of their fortunes.

There is nothing actually corresponding to this in the experience of the Christian when he is called to cross into the better land. Of special preparation for heaven the Christian needs none. If he be in Christ, that is enough; he is safe. If he be a believer, he can have no less, and though he were the highest of saints that ever caught the light of the face of God, he could have no more, than to be 'found in him, not having his own righteousness, but that which is of Christ by faith.' Even with the Hebrews it was no preparation of their own that was to cleave Jordan for them, but the power of their covenant God. So with us

it is Christ—no preparation or courage of our own, but Christ—who has taken the sting from death and the victory from the grave. Are we true Christians? Then at all times and in all places we are prepared to die, and to pass into our inheritance. If not in Christ, we never can be ready, and no preparation that human philosophy can supply can make us ready.

Yet the near sight of so great a change could not but move us, were the warning given to ourselves, 'Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live'—'within three days thou shalt pass over this Jordan.' There would be an intense revival of faith and hope, and in that close sight of heaven a flinging away of all earthly and temporal ties. But this quickening effect which the announcement of approaching death would work upon us, should it not be produced by the very absence of the announcement, and by that solemn uncertainty which God permits to rest over the time of our departure?

The very uncertainty is full of warning eloquence. The thought should come to us like one of those messages from God which every now and then revive the soul's hope, and place us face to face with the world unseen. Are we really in Christ, saved and at peace, or are we only intending, doubting, hesitating about a Saviour not yet sought—a salvation not yet found? Would the words be as a cry out of the world of torment, or like a strain of the everlasting song, should we hear the announcement now: 'Within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan'?

¶ A friend of mine was coming home in a railway train from England. The carriage got crowded up with soldiers, one or two of them wounded from the front. And my friend, ensconced behind his newspaper, sat and listened to their talk—not all of it fitted for polite society. But there was one thing said he will never forget, which he passed on to me. 'Boys,' said a rough-looking private, 'I have never prayed since I was a scholar in the Sunday school—*but in the trenches I started praying again.*' I wonder who his Sunday School teacher was? Probably she thought her work with him a failure. Perhaps he was an incorrigible little rascal, who had almost broken his teacher's heart. But the point is, that beside the swelling Jordan, when death like a mighty river was ahead, he felt his need of the living God again.[1]

If Heaven be the land we hope to reach,
Is it not time to learn the heavenly speech?

It were so sad, amid the shining band
To roam, lost children, none could understand:

While blessed eyes should learn a sweet despair,
Knowing we never could be happy there.[2]

## Rahab.

Josh. ii. 1.—'And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men as spies secretly, saying, Go view the land, and Jericho. And they went, and came into the house of an harlot whose name was Rahab, and lay there' (RV).

As a wise leader, Joshua determined to take no risks, but to know all the facts before he entered far within the confines of Canaan. He had been a spy himself, and knew well the value of the service which brave, watchful, and tactful spies could render. It was natural, therefore, that he should reconnoitre the country by means of spies. The duty laid on these two spies was most perilous; they literally took their lives in their hands. They were going into a den of lions, and yet they were expected to return in safety. We are told that they were young men, and it is probable that they were men of great prominence in their tribes. It has been suggested that they disguised themselves, removing from their dress everything that was distinctly Hebrew. Perhaps they assumed the garb of neighbouring peasants, carrying a basket, and offering produce of some sort for sale in the city. Perhaps they were familiar with the Canaanite language and local dialect and accent. But the local officials were keenly on the watch, and the appearance of the spies as Hebrews and their manner as strangers could not long be concealed.

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Untrodden Way*, 27.
[2] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 28.

We follow these men as they leave Shittim and start on their perilous journey; we see them as they cross the fords—this necessitating swimming, as the waters were high; and we see them entering the gates and threading the streets of Jericho. What will be their fate? Is it probable, or even possible, that they can return alive? It was providential that they found refuge in the house of Rahab. The opening of her doors to these men marked an era in her chequered life. That act meant her own physical and spiritual salvation, and the protection of her family when the city was sacked by the Israelites. It gave her a place in the inspired narrative of Israel's history, and, as we have reason to hope, a place in the Lamb's Book of Life.

At the time of the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan she was living in a house of her own, although her parents, brothers, and sisters lived elsewhere in Jericho. A term of reproach is associated with her name, both in the Hebrew and in the Greek Scriptures. Josephus, however, calls her an innkeeper. Dr. Adam Clarke stoutly argues against associating an opprobrious term with her name—the term which is the usual translation of the Hebrew and Greek words. He shows, by abundant citation of authorities, that women were usually the innkeepers in Greece and Egypt in early times; and he makes mention of several strong points in the narrative in harmony with the idea that Rahab was simply the keeper of a lodging-house. He vigorously deprecates the idea of applying the term 'harlot,' as the translation of the Hebrew word *zonah*, to a woman who was an ancestress of our Lord. We need not, however, be more solicitous regarding any ancestress of Christ than were the writers of the New Testament. Among her people probably but little stigma attached to the name. Some have supposed that she was a priestess of Ashtoreth, the Phœnician Venus; if so, she was consecrated to this goddess as women are devoted to-day to similar goddesses in India. It is quite certain that there was great moral degradation among the Canaanites; it is a fact, also, that the present village of er-Riha, perhaps on the site of ancient Jericho, is noted for its immorality. We are familiar with the fact that, as in the case of the *hetairai* of Athens and of corresponding classes to-day in Japan, there was but little dishonour in her occupation, even if we give to the term which is applied to her its severest meaning. It is certain that in her case the bonds of family life were not broken, and that she exercised no little influence in the community. She seems to have had a regular trade, being engaged in the manufacture of linen and in the art of dyeing. On the flat roof of her house there were stalks of flax put there to dry, and she had also a supply of scarlet or crimson cord.

Whatever disguise the spies may have adopted, they were soon suspected. Someone who observed them going to the house of Rahab informed the king. Rahab quickly suspected the danger to which they were exposed, and she immediately hid them under the flax stalks that were on the roof of her house. Soon the officers of the king arrived to search the house. She was ready, however, with her plausible story, informing them that two men, of what country she did not know, had visited her house—it was not her business to be too inquisitive regarding her visitors—and that if pursuit were made immediately the men would be overtaken. Not having half her wit, the officials took her at her word; they started in pursuit towards the ford of the Jordan, the gates having been opened for their exit and immediately closed again. All was now quiet; she stole up to the roof, gave information of what had happened, and assured the spies of her faith in Israel's God. She then let them down by a cord from the window of her house, which was on the city wall. She instructed them to make their escape after hiding three days in the mountains. The pursuers would then have returned, and the fords of Jordan would be open. The men took a solemn oath that, in return for her kindness, they would protect her and all her family when Jericho should fall into the power of the Israelites. Her plans worked admirably; the officials of the king, after their wild-goose chase, came back to Jericho; and the spies of Joshua returned in safety to the camp of Israel. The sign agreed upon between her and the spies

was the hanging of the scarlet line in the window from which they had escaped. The narrative distinctly informs us that Joshua saved her and her father's house and all that she had. The narrator adds, 'and she dwelleth in Israel unto this day.'

Rahab's act made her immortal. In Matt. i. 5, we learn that she became the wife of Salmon, and the mother of Boaz, who was the grandfather of Jesse. Most writers suppose that Salmon was one of the spies whom she so greatly befriended at a critical moment in their lives; if so, we see that not only gratitude but a more tender passion toward her filled his soul. We know that the spies were young men, and it is not at all improbable that Salmon was one of the two. It is quite certain, on the authority of Matthew, that Rahab was a mother in the line from which David, and eventually Christ, sprang. Most remarkable is it that Matthew, in his genealogy of our Lord, taking his statements, in all probability, from the public archives, mention but four women—Tamar, Rahab—almost assuredly the Rahab of Joshua's narrative—Ruth and, implicitly, Bathsheba. Three of these have tainted names, the fourth was by birth a heathen; and all the four were apparently foreigners. Each of the four became a mother in the Messianic line in an extraordinary way. This fact is probably the reason why their names are given. How little Rahab knew what it was to mean in her history and her destiny for time and eternity, that act of kindness to the emissaries of Joshua!

1. The moral difficulties in the story of Rahab are great.

(1) One of these difficulties is found in her treachery to her own people. The treachery was real. Can it be justified? In itself, it was utterly condemnable. It is justifiable only on the ground that fidelity to her country would have been infidelity to God. The claims of God are supreme; as against them the claims springing out of the ties of country and family are utterly subordinate. The higher duty which men owe to God holds in suspense the lower duty to country and to family. It is certain that she did not forget the obligations of family relationship; she was greatly influenced by natural affection; but her loyalty to the true God rightly overcame her devotion to the abominable gods of her country.

(2) Another moral difficulty is the falsehood which she told regarding the escape of the spies. It was a plain falsehood. No attempt ought to be made to deny the true character of her statement; neither should any attempt be made to justify it. There may be times when to save our own life—as, for example, when attacked by a madman—a falsehood is justifiable; but a lie, in itself considered, must always be offensive to the God of truth. No casuistry can make this part of her conduct wholly right. In Heb. xi. 31, and in James ii. 25, she is commended. This commendation has greatly perplexed some Bible students; but on what account is she commended? For her previous life? No. For her treachery to her country? No. For her falsehood regarding the spies? No. For what, then, is she commended? In Hebrews she is eulogized for her faith, and in James for her works. Many of those who are commended in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews are not praised in their entirety. They are praised simply for some worthy act, or as an example of heroic faith. We may heartily commend an orator for his eloquence, while we may earnestly oppose his vagaries as a statesman.

¶ Among many interesting experiences, one especially I shall never forget. Like the others, it occurred during my service for Sir Frederick Treves as house-surgeon, and I believe he told the story. A very badly burned woman had been brought into hospital. Her dress had somehow got soaked in paraffin and had then taken fire. Her terribly extensive burns left no hope whatever of her recovery, and only the convention of society kept us from giving the poor creature the relief of euthanasia, or some cup of laudanum negus. But the law was interested. A magistrate was brought to the bedside and the husband sent for. The nature of the evidence, the meaning of the oath, the importance of the poor creature acknowledging that her words were spoken 'in hopeless fear of immediate death,' were all duly impressed upon what remained

of her mind. The police then brought in the savage, degraded-looking husband, and made him stand between two policemen at the foot of the bed, facing his mangled wife. The magistrate, after preliminary questions, asked her to make her dying statement as to how she came by her death. There was a terrible moment of silence. It seemed as if her spirit were no longer able to respond to the stimuli of life on earth. Then a sudden rebound appeared to take place, her eyes lit up with a flash of light, and even endeavouring to raise her piteous body, she said, 'It was an accident, Judge. I upset the lamp myself, so help me God'; and just for one moment her eyes met those of her miserable husband. It was the last time she spoke.[1]

2. But yet, a very remarkable woman was Rahab. She was the first Canaanite whom the Israelites met across the Jordan, and she showed herself to be characterful to a striking degree. She was probably the only person in all that dark and guilty land who believed in Israel's God and in God's Israel. In some mysterious way rays of Divine light had fallen upon her soul. Christ is the light of the world; and all true light, through whatever medium it comes, is from Christ, its central source. Rahab made an explicit avowal of her faith in Jehovah as the only God of heaven and earth. Such a confession, in her circumstances, is simply marvellous. It set aside all her early training and all the opinions of her people. There was a great gulf between Rahab as the worshipper of Baal and Ashtoreth, and Rahab as a believer in the true God. Her heathen faith disappeared; and with it her old conduct and character; her soul awoke to a new life and to an exalted destiny.

She also clearly gave the reason for her faith; it was a faith that reasoned from facts. Her knowledge went back through the long years to the triumphs of God at the Red Sea; it also recognized the utter destruction of Sihon and Og. She reasoned that the God of Israel must be mightier than the gods of her country. Thus history confirmed her incipient faith. True history is always a witness for God. If men would but study God's acts, they could not doubt God's existence. Her faith was practical, bringing forth fruit in works. Her woman's ingenuity was finely shown. A new life was the fruit of her new faith. That faith made her immortal; but for that faith and its appropriate fruit we never should have heard of her name. She linked her name with Jesus Christ; and, in her measure, she shares in the immortality of the Name which is above every name.

[1] W. T. Grenfell, *A Labrador Doctor*, 77.

## The Scarlet Thread.

Josh. ii. 18.—'Thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window.'

1. In the tropical forest a lovely orchid blossom not infrequently grows on a rotten piece of wood; and on a pagan creed, and even on an immoral life, an equally unexpected and beautiful flower of righteousness may unfold itself. Rahab, shall we say? was one of those exceptional persons who in a heathen land and in the midst of evil circumstances had in her heart some good thing toward the God of Israel, and therefore befriended the representatives of His chosen people in their hour of danger. She knew with the prophetic insight of faith that the future of Canaan was with the children of Israel, and not with her own people. And therefore, with the higher patriotism of heaven, she leagued herself with the invaders of her country. The deeper instincts of her nature were stirred by the accounts which she heard of God's marvellous doings on their behalf; and she longed to cast in her lot with them, that she might be delivered from the base associations of her life, and made pure in heart and conduct to serve henceforward the living and true God.

In the light of this explanation of her character and history, let us look at the scarlet line which she hung out of her window. It was the signal agreed upon between her and the spies whom she had befriended. By it her house was to be marked out from all the other houses in the city, and all the inmates were to be spared when Jericho should be taken and its inhabitants put to the sword. She was to be paid in kind, rewarded in the

line of her own act. The very rope by which she had let the spies escape was to be the means of her own deliverance. Out of her own home and from her daily employment came the way of safety. Literally the work of her own hands was established upon her. So long as that red flag of danger hung from her window, she and all her household would be safe.

Why was a scarlet line chosen to guard her house? Was it because this flaming colour, contrasting with the white clay-built wall over which it hung, would be more conspicuous than any other, and would thus be more easily seen by the conquerors in the sack of the city? Or was it simply because this article happened to be conveniently at hand, among the materials of Rahab's daily industry? These may have been her primary reasons, but perhaps another motive may have mingled with them. Among pagan people religious ideas are attached to objects which to us have no such significance. They watch for signs in the heavens above and in the earth beneath—the flight of birds, the shapes and motions of the clouds, the habits of beasts and the various appearances of Nature; and they interpret these as omens or auguries of spiritual things and of future events. Colours especially are to them full of mysterious meanings. It is curious how, in every part of the world and among every race, red is regarded with special reverence as a sacred colour. It is supposed to possess certain virtues against the evil eye and against wicked spirits.

¶ In the north of Scotland women used to tie a piece of red worsted thread around the tails of the calves before turning them out to grass the first time in spring; and in Germany the herdsmen lay a woman's red apron before the threshold of the cow-house, and make the cows step over it in going out to pasture. In Poland mothers put a red thread on their infants' cradles to keep off unknown dangers; and in China they tie a red thread round their children's wrists as the best safeguard against demons. This was done, you remember, in the case of Zarah, the son of Tamar, at the time of his birth, to guard his rights as the first-born. . . . Cairns of stones with sticks and bits of red-coloured cloth attached to them occur on every difficult mountain-pass throughout India, to insure safety to the traveller. The robin owes his sacred character, which protects him from all injury, to his red breast; the power of the rowan-tree to ward off the unhallowed spells of witches is derived from its red berries; and the scarlet of the holly-berry is supposed to be an effectual charm against the evil spirits that are about at Christmas-time. And in all likelihood our adoption of a red lamp on the street and on the railway as a danger-signal, and our calling some days that are peculiarly fortunate and free from trouble red-letter days, may be survivals of this old superstitious feeling. It existed in ancient Canaan, as well as in this country; and even at the present day a red hand is almost universally painted over the door of the house in the East to guard the inmates from danger. We have every reason, therefore, to believe that Rahab, in conformity with this old superstition, selected a scarlet line as the means by which the spies were to escape from danger, and as the sign by which she herself was to be protected and delivered from peril when the city should be besieged and taken.[1]

2. In all ages of the Church, the deliverance by Rahab has been deemed typical of salvation through the blood of Christ. The scarlet line has always suggested the blood of redemption. It is not here taught that Scripture anywhere makes this affirmation; but the suggestion has occurred to almost all students of Scripture and preachers of redemption. It is in line with the significance of the blood of the Paschal lamb on the lintel and side posts of the doors of the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. The scarlet cord was the means of the salvation of the messengers, and later of the salvation of Rahab and her household. Only that scarlet cord could insure safety; if the conditions of safety in relation to the sign had not been observed, safety would have been impossible. In this respect, the scarlet cord becomes profoundly significant. It is interesting that interpreters have so heartily agreed on the typical significance of the scarlet line. Thus we find Clement, Justin Martyr, Ireu-

[1] H. Macmillan.

æus, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Theoloret, all following and emphasizing this thought. The phrase 'scarlet cord' is used as the synonym of safety through the vicarious intervention or suffering of another. The thought is the very heart of Atonement. Atonement is simply at-onement; it is a bringing together so as to be at one. It is the expiation of sin made by the obedience and sufferings of Christ. Many persons violently oppose this idea as a part of our Christian religion; but if they object to this thought in religion, they ought to object to it in all life. The scarlet line runs through the entire Bible; it also runs through all human history. An American poet has expressed the universality of this law when he said:

> Life evermore is fed by death,
> In earth and sea and sky;
> And that a rose may breathe its breath,
> Something must die.

It suggests some of the noblest and most heroic acts ever performed among men. To take the scarlet line out of life would rob it of much of its glory. It is amazing that critics object to what they call 'blood theology,' when they highly praise what they call 'blood friendship.' It was the spirit of the scarlet cord that gave us the superbly heroic story of Damon and Pythias; it gave us the glorious friendship of David and Jonathan; it gave us Eleanor, the wife of Edward I. of England, sucking the poison from her husband's wound. It gave us the marvellous bravery of our men in the Great War, giving their lives with joy to save the life of their nation.

¶ A beautiful young woman was so severely burned that she died as the result of the burns and the shock. At the service her sister sat with hands and arms bound up and helpless from burns received in the attempt to rescue her sister from the flames. In response to a sympathetic remark of the pastor, she said, 'I would have given both my arms if I could have saved my sister's life.' This was the scarlet line in that family; this was the spirit of Jesus Christ in His vicarious suffering for our redemption.[1]

[1] R. S. MacArthur.

3. Rahab was saved in precisely the same way that every sinner is saved. God has not different ways of deliverance in different ages. There is only one way—the way of faith in God, suited for all, within reach of all. It is by the same scarlet line that every human soul escapes from the city of destruction and is drawn up to heaven. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, that alone can cleanse from sin every human soul that trusts in it, that alone can deliver it from the Divine wrath due to its sins. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, by including the name of Rahab in the golden roll of Hebrew worthies, showed that her faith was the link which united all the ages and generations of God's saints. Faith in God was their common characteristic. That scarlet line runs through the Bible from beginning to end, and hangs from every window of promise and every revelation of hope; it is by it that every believer lays hold on eternal life.

But what was dark and mysterious to Rahab is clearly revealed to us. She lived in an age of types and shadows. For her there was not, as yet, any real sacrifice for sin. Her access to the Divine Presence was imperfect. But Christ has come, and by His one all-sufficient sacrifice has turned shadows into realities, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. What the heathen vainly sought in their red charms and amulets, we find truly in the slain Lamb of God. Safer than the Israelites within their blood-sprinkled door-posts, safer than the priests under the red ramskin coverings of the tabernacle, safer than Rahab with the scarlet line hanging from her window will everyone be who has no confidence in the flesh, but trusts in the blood and righteousness of our Saviour Jesus Christ. God looks upon the sign which He Himself has given, and delivers us from all our sins and perils. Henceforth there is no condemnation to us, for we are not under the law, but under grace.

Justice doth call for vengance on my sins,
And threatens death as guerdon for the same;

Mercy to plead for pardon then begins,
With saying, Christ hath undergone the shame.
Justice shews me an angry God offended,
And Mercy shews a Saviour crucified:
Justice says, I that sinn'd must be condemnéd:
Mercy replies, Christ for my sins hath died.
Grim Justice threats with a revengful rod:
Meek Mercy shews me an appeaséd God.
Lord! though my sins make me for Justice fit,
Through Christ let Mercy triumph over it.

## The Known and the Unknown.

(NEW YEAR).

Josh. iii. 4.—'Ye have not passed this way heretofore.'

THESE words are not an isolated text, but part of the great charge given by the leader Joshua to Israel; and it will be well for us, therefore, to glance at the context. The scene is a very wonderful one, for the tents of Israel were pitched in their thousands; and they were filled with men and women who were weary of wandering and whose hopes were all fixed on the land that lay before them. Behind them was a long experience of disobedience and failure and sin on the human side, and of guidance, deliverance and the daily supply of daily need on the Divine side. For forty years they had been learning to know both themselves and the marvellous patience and power of God. And now, for the second time, He had led them to the margin of the land. It lay before them with its hills and valleys, and its pleasant vineyards and white-walled cities, and they were at the parting of the ways in more senses than one. It was not merely that the wilderness experience was to be changed for the Land of Promise, but all the lessons they had learned were now to bear their fruit and bring their blessing to the people. They had learned to lean upon God, to look for His guidance, and to trust His power to provide and protect. Now they were going to step out into a future that was all unknown, and in which every step would test those lessons of faith and obedience and loyalty and love.

1. It is the unknown in life that arrests us first. 'Ye have not passed this way heretofore.' The Israelites knew but little of what lay before them. It was all new and strange. Is not this true of us? We are passing into a new year, a new period of our history, a new slice of time cut out of the eternities. What do we know of it? It is an unknown, an unexplored country. A thick veil hides it from our view. All attempts to forecast it, and tell exactly what it shall bring to us all, will end in disappointment. Man can recount and record the past. Digging up from the archives of the nations the dusty chronicles of the peoples who have been, he can let us see them much as they were; unearthing buried cities and piecing together broken columns and marbles, he can erect again for us the noble buildings of the past. He can foretell the eclipses of the sun and the moon, and tell us when the stars will be seen. The keen, watchful, intelligent politician may be able to forecast the future a little. He may be able to judge by the current of public life and opinion, by the wisdom or unwisdom of men in office, when the ministry will fall, and may predict with tolerable accuracy who will be next Prime Minister. But where is the man who can forecast what a new year will bring to us? Given the whole number of us and our ages, such is the certainty of the law of averages, that it will be easy to say how many of us will have shuffled off this mortal coil. But who shall it be? Naturally we should think the oldest. But, in the strange, unknown providence of God, the most aged saint here may see the next new year begin, whilst the youngest may be gone to-morrow. It is the unexpected that often happens. It is an unknown country we enter. And he is the wise man who enters it in God's name and God's strength, assured that He works all things well.

¶ Have you never felt that you would give half the world to know what is hidden in the lap of the gods for you, to be revealed during the next twelve hours? Does not the general whose plans of battle are all made, who waits but for the first ray of light from yonder hill to send his cannon shot within the enemy's

lines, sometimes wish that for love or money, or even at the price of his own eternal doom, he might know the end of this fateful day? Will not the wretched prisoner in his lonely cell, who hears even now the scaffold being reared, wish to know at any cost whether the reprieve he longs for will reach him in time to save his neck from the fatal noose? Well, that is but the crowding of our whole life's experience into the narrow compass of a poor twelve hours. We, too, would draw a bill upon the bank of Fate, would antedate our destiny and read in the entrails of beasts or in the gyrations of the stars our own predestined end. And the answer to our prayers and inquiries is always a blank denial, a brazen door that closes against our beating hands and gives only an echo to our piteous appeal. Have you sought to probe the mysterious purposes that your life is to help to fulfil? It is a futile quest, and you, like the rest of us, must learn even to wait with patience and with courage for the coming of the event.[1]

One thing that would hearten the children of Israel was this, that the way was not a way of their own choosing: they were there because God had brought them there. They were far from perfect. They were not saints or angels in disguise. They could lie—they could murmur—they could cheat—they could make a golden calf and worship it. But the fact remained, in spite of all national failure, that they were under the leadership of God, and it was He who had brought them to the river. Had they burst from Egypt when the passion seized them; had they wandered in the desert at their will; had they come to the river recklessly and wildly, how different would it all have been! And we feel, do we not? how amid all tremblings, this must have mightily heartened them at Jordan—that they were there because it was God's will. It was He who had brought them out of the house of bondage. It was He who had led them through these forty years. Every circuit and bivouac and battle had been ordered and arranged by Him. And it helps a man, and stablishes his heart, and gives him confidence for the untrodden way, when he feels that God has brought him there.

[1] A. C. Hill, *The Sword of the Lord*, 97.

2. But it is not all unknown. The Israelites knew that there would be foes to face, hard work to be done, battles to be fought, enemies to be conquered. Jericho was yonder across the plains, not many miles away. It had to be taken. They were assured of much hard fighting. We too may be assured of that. We must cross our Jordans, and overcome many a stronghold. The enemies of God and the soul meet us on every hand, and we are not more sure of death itself than we are of many a conflict, many a battle, many a struggle, and many a time of heart-searching and pain. It is through much tribulation we enter the Kingdom. And this does not refer simply to the kingdom to come, it is true of the kingdom that now is. The kingdoms of knowledge, of progress, of wealth, of goodness, of peace, of rest, of joy—all are entered through much tribulation. There is no primrose path to the land of promise. Life is not a review day, with the troops marching past in full dress. There are forced marches, short rations, wet camps, watchful nights, and the enemy's fire. Our journey through the years is not a grand progress over velvet lawns, in glorious sunshine, with the birds making the air vocal with their music. It often lies down deep valleys, through fogs and mists, over moor and fen, across sharp rocks and up thorny paths, in which our feet, 'all torn and bleeding mark the way.' Every prudent man who knows a little of life will expect it to be so.

In pastures green? Not always; sometimes He
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me
By weary ways, where heavy shadows be.

And by still waters? No, not always so;
Oft-times the heavy tempests round me blow,
And o'er my soul the waves and billows go.

But when the storm is loudest, and I cry
Aloud for help, the Master standeth by
And whispers to my soul, 'Lo, it is I.'

Above the tempest wild I hear Him say,
'Beyond this darkness lies the perfect day,
In every path of thine I lead the way.'

So, whether on the hill-tops high and fair
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys where
The shadows lie—what matter? He is there.[1]

The Israelites would recall that this untrodden way was not quite so untrodden as they thought. To-night they are confronted by a river, turbid and boisterous, which they cannot pass. And they hear the rushing of it, and are frightened; they have never met anything like this before. And then some old and godly woman, it may be, reminds them of what they had quite forgotten, how forty long and weary years ago Israel had been confronted by a sea. Save Caleb and Joshua, everyone was dead who had shared in that marching through the sea. It was not now a matter of experience. It was enrolled among the facts of history. But we can well conceive how it would hearten them to believe that God would bring them through the river, when they remembered He had brought their fathers through the sea.

¶ In one of his books,[2] Mr. F. W. Boreham gives us this piece of autobiography: In the dear old home at Tunbridge Wells, the home that sheltered my earliest infancy, the home in which my parents still abide, there hangs a framed text. It is only a plainly printed scrap of white paper, cut from the corner of a penny sheet-almanac; and yet, if something had to go, I fancy the finest pictures in the house would be sacrificed to save it. It reads like this:

HITHERTO
HATH
THE LORD
HELPED US.

It occupies a place of honour over the mantelpiece in my mother's bedroom. It has been there for more than thirty years; but I remember, as though it were but yesterday, the day when it appeared there for the first time. We boys had a dim consciousness that things were going hardly with father and mother. He looked anxious and worried; her eyes were often red and swollen; both were unusually silent. Then one day the newly framed text made its appearance on the bedroom wall. We boys were only small, but it struck us as strange that this small scrap of white paper should have been thought worthy of such conspicuous promotion. Were there not hundreds of pretty cards lying about the home, any one of which would have made a much more tasty and beautiful adornment? But somehow we felt that things at home were brighter. It was as if the weather had cleared up; the fog had lifted; drizzling rain had yielded to summer sunshine; father and mother were happier. One morning we mustered up courage to ask some explanation. Why had the plain little text been cut from the almanac in the kitchen and been honoured with a frame in the bedroom?

But it was never in the morning, amidst the clatter and the bustle, that mother opened her heart to us. Our golden hour came on Sunday evening. . . . It was then that mother told us all the secrets.

'You said the other morning, mother, that you would tell us why you framed the paper text in the bedroom.'

'Well, I will. You know that father and I had a great trouble, and we feared a much heavier one. On Tuesday of last week I was feeling dreadfully worried. I do not know why I felt it so terribly just then, but I did. I had to drop my work, pick up the baby, and walk up and down the kitchen feeling that I could endure it all no longer. My burden seemed more than I could bear. It was crushing me beneath its weight. In pacing up and down I paused for a second in front of the sheet-almanac on the wall. The only thing I saw was the text in the corner. I felt as if it had been put there specially for me. It was as if some one had spoken the words: 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.' I was so overcome that I sat down and had a good cry; and then I began again with fresh heart and trust. When father came home I told him all about it, and he cut out the text with his penknife, had it framed, and hung it where you now see it.'

[1] H. H. Barry.
[2] *The Other Side of the Hill*, 117ff.

## A New Departure.

(NEW YEAR).

Josh. iii. 4.—'Ye have not passed this way heretofore.'

It was a new departure in Israel's history. It cannot be said it was the most critical. Those who passed the Red Sea had had an experience as strange, as real, and as full of important consequences. Likewise the experiences of the wilderness might be pitted against it. But this—the passage of Jordan—had a character and significance of its own. It was well that the people should be reminded of this. They were so reminded, but they were given what was equally important to them—direction. If any earnest spirits in that invading host asked of their chief, 'What steps shall we take? What course shall we follow? We have promised to follow thee as we did Moses. How shall we follow thee at this juncture and under these unprecedented circumstances?'—we have in the context an answer to the question—'The priests shall go before you into the waters; they shall bear the ark. Let that ark be your cynosure; where it goes, go; where it stops, pause, you cannot go wrong. But remember it is a holy thing—it is the ark of the Lord. It demands the gaze of your eye conjoined with the deepest reverence of your heart. Let there be a space of two thousand cubits between you and it—it is God that is directing you.' Such was the behest to Israel at this point of its departure, clear, and intelligible. 'Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore.'

1. Was this written for Israel only? No, but to the end of time, for all pilgrims who have to tread the pilgrimage of life. And if there be any conjuncture of time which speaks trumpet-tongued to us all with the same admonition and with the same direction, it is now as we stand at the beginning of a year, a year which is pregnant with mysteries that we cannot gauge or fathom. Let us bear it in mind in view of the many untried events and contingencies which we may encounter, for a recollection of this simple truth will be of the most solid consequence to us, a friendly talisman, if not an absolute guarantee of security. Let us take some particular points of view and note how the text bears upon our possible circumstances.

(1) The point of view of *prosperity and adversity*. Who can tell what is before us in this respect? There is no knowing but some of us may have an unlooked for accession of fortune before the year is out. Suppose it. Is it all plain sailing then and thereafter? Are there no accompanying snares? At all events the admonition is not out of place. 'You have not passed this way heretofore.' Or just as possible—more possible—there may be in store for us an adverse turn, some unforeseen event that will totally change our circumstances. Is not the reminder helpful here? Job was bereft of all his possessions by a single collapse; we have heard of his patience and we have heard of his impatience too, but never a whit did he lose his patience as a consequence of the turn of the adverse wheel of fortune. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.' What gave him that equability and resignation of mind? Did he hear the admonishing voice? Was it thus his steps were guarded? It is worth considering. Did he study the aphorism, 'I have not passed this way heretofore'? If so it was a success.

(2) The point of view of *the new relations of life into which we may be brought*. Before the year ends it is more than probable that some of us will have changed our condition; marrying and giving in marriage will go on as long as this world lasts. But marriage is not all a honeymoon—it is a different road from that on which you walked when you were single. Do not be surprised if you have to pick your steps along the way. It is a serious thing—two immortal beings united by an indissoluble knot. The chances are they will make each other better or worse—that is, in a moral or spiritual sense.

Or some of you may get some new office, and you think of nothing but the preferment

you have obtained, and perhaps the emolument that accompanies it; but the responsibilities are just as inevitable. The selfish spirit that thinks only of the one without respect to the other reverses the order of things. Give us the man who can say 'I have not trodden this way heretofore. I must pick my steps, I am ignorant, I am a child.' This was Solomon's prayer in his best days, and it does not matter what that preferment may be,—from a man or maid servant who has got a new place to a king who has succeeded to a throne—it is all the same: I have had no experience in this walk. I must be the more careful the more everything is new to me now. I have not passed this way heretofore—all is new.

(3) *Perhaps the change is in our persons* as distinguished from our circumstances. It is not only our circumstances that are liable to change; we ourselves are inevitably changing. Life is bisectable into up the hill and down the hill, but in each course the admonition must be borne in mind. Youth has got a free hand, it is glad to get out of leading strings, it joys in its independence, but it were well that the novelty of the situation should be recognized too. Double wisdom is chargeable on you now—now that you are your own counsellor. Nor is the admonition less requisite for age and even the decline of life. This is down the hill. You are liable now to make acquaintance with waning faculties, waning strength. Is there no liability to fret, to murmur, at least to be surprised? Yes, if you do not remember the situation, the inevitable course of events. Yes, if you do not bear in mind the axiom so plain and palpable which everyone acknowledges in another's case but not in his own: 'I have never trodden this way before.'

2. That is the admonition. What is the direction? Underlying the narrative there is a truth that may become as significant to us as the outward form of it was to the Israelites.

(1) It was said to them, 'When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests and Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.' The eyes of the Israelites were directed to the Ark of the Covenant. It is what we see that must guide us. What was it that the people of Israel were to see? It was something different from what they had been accustomed to see. Hitherto they had seen the cloudy pillar by day and the pillar of fire by night. That was an object in Nature raised to what we call the supernatural. It told them that Jehovah was at the head of their hosts, and that they were to go wherever He pointed. It spoke of God as higher and greater than all that Nature discloses, that He was One of whom it could be said, 'Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.' But now God had revealed Himself in another way. He had come into a personal relation with His people as their covenant God; He had given them His law placed within the ark, and on the lid of it, called the mercy-seat, had been sprinkled the blood of the slain victims that spoke the great truth; 'For with thee is forgiveness.' This was something more significant than the cloudy pillar; it indicated a more substantial stage of religious training. Therefore it was to this that the eyes of the people were to be directed as they marched in solemn procession.

(2) We cannot guide one another. This truth was intended to be suggested by the direction that follows: 'Yet there shall be a space between you and it about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go.' Had the ark been placed a few feet in front of the line of march, it would have been seen only by those in the van. It was placed at the distance of nearly a mile that it might be conspicuous to the whole army. No doubt the procession could have been kept in the right track by those behind simply keeping in step with those in front; but the design seems to have been to awaken in each a sense of personal responsibility. None were to see with the eyes of others; all were to use their own eyes. It was an acted parable of a truth that is as important to-day as it was then.

¶ On the Sunday before leaving Palamcottah I preached for the new year on Joshua iii. 3: 'Go after it,' taking the Ark to represent Christ. If we go after Him this year it will mean to us what it meant (though in a mat-

erial sense) to Israel—guidance, assurance, victory, succour.[1]

## Prepare For Great Things.

Josh. iii. 5.—'Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.'

THE people were on the borders of the Promised Land; the weary wanderings, the hardships, the privations of the wilderness life were nearly over. One great sin had lengthened the period of trial by many years; continual failings and failures had intensified their hardships and increased their troubles. But now the land lay before them, ready to be possessed; the fears and the faithlessness of years seemed almost gone as the Divinely appointed leader stepped forward with cheery optimism to detail the plan of campaign.

It was the optimism of Divine assurance and of God-given certitude: 'Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land.' It was none the less the optimism of careful forethought and of skilful strategy. Joshua dared to be an optimist, not because he minimized the task before him, but because he realized the forces he could call to his support. He faced a crisis as all crises must be faced, and the result justified his attitude; but it was so only because he carefully prepared himself and his people according to Divine direction for the work before them.

We are faced with a similar crisis in this England of ours. The land is to be possessed for God and for spiritual religion, and we must take our part in the work. To-day is the day of opportunity. But our action must be well considered and Divinely guided. It must be modelled on that of Joshua.

1. What is the secret of success? It is sanctification. 'Sanctify yourselves'—that is the word. It is something we are to do for ourselves; to do, if you will, by God's power and in the Spirit's energy; but He is waiting to energize us for the doing of it. He who speaks the word to us, to whom its fulfilment is impossible, will make it possible if we are willing to obey His command. And so He says to us to-day, 'Sanctify yourselves.' What does it mean? It means set yourselves apart to God from sin and every doubtful thing; it means cleanse yourself; it means lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset you. If there is a doubt, let God have the benefit of the doubt. Lay aside the doubtful things, and the wrong things, and the questionable things—'Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.'

2. Is this the whole secret? As we read further we learn that Joshua took measures of a material kind. He took a careful survey of the position. He rallied all his forces. He saw to the commissariat.

(1) Joshua commenced operations by a careful survey of the position. He took measure of the dark fortress before him; although the victory was to be God's, and God's alone, he had the land as carefully viewed as if every inch had to be fought for at the point of his own sword.

(2) Next, he rallied all his forces; the tribes already enjoying their inheritance were called to his aid, and they readily obeyed the call. Both acts are significant: to-day sometimes the tribes seem unwilling to come, and sometimes men seem unwilling to call them. 'Do your duty where God has placed you; make your own work, your own parish, as efficient as you can; and from any other interest in the general welfare of the Church stand aloof.' Such seems the attitude of some. Says another, Do we want the help of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh? Their ambitions are obviously a little different from ours. Their methods, their ritual, their practice, and their preaching do not quite seem to tally with ours. Are they evangelical? Are they loyal? Shall we never learn the lesson that there must often be within our own ranks diversity of view and diversity of practice, and that we need the help and fellowship of every man who loyally and *ex animo* accepts the issue?

God save our faith from that schismatic heart
That snaps at others' creed its 'There we part.'

[1] A. W. Carmichael, *Walker of Tinnevelly*, 153.

God grant us charity, whose thoughts are sweet,
And ripen difference to, 'There we meet!'[1]

(3) Lastly, Joshua bade the host supply itself with victuals; and we also need means of sustenance. Two applications of this come immediately to mind—namely, the need of cheap literature embodying our beliefs and helping our devotion, and the need of education.

¶ When I as an adult Christian meet the problem of how large my missionary contribution shall be, I seek information concerning the missions of to-day. When I want to know what my duty is with respect to the liquor traffic, I study its baleful effects and also the methods of fighting it. When the preacher asks me to support a proposed child-labour law, I want him to give me the facts with regard to children in industry and with regard to the laws on the subject. If loyalty to the church is in question, I must know something of the history of the church, something of its actual position in present society, and something concerning the more effective forms of church life. This is the way that we adults study to be Christian. The way for children is not different in principle but only in the application. Extra-biblical material for study is just as necessary for them as for us, because their problems, like our own, have to do with enterprises and adjustments concerning which the Bible gives no whit of information—missions in lands unknown in ancient times; philanthropic enterprises under conditions and by methods not so much as conceived by any biblical writer; social adjustments in the home, on the playground, at school, in the choice of an occupation, in the conduct of one's occupation, in the use of the ballot, which must be studied directly if they are to be understood at all.[2]

[1] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 30.
[2] G. A. Coe, *A Social Theory of Religious Education*, 114.

## At the Brink.

Josh. iii. 8.—'When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan.'

Go as far as God bids you and stand still: stand still and look for a miracle! The law is of universal application. 'God helps those who help themselves.' 'Undertake great things for God and expect great things from God.' 'According to your faith be it unto you.' Had the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant gone forward with laggard step, flouting at miracles, they would have met with the discomfiture which befalls the doubting and cavilling in every age. But they had proved God and were prepared to take Him at His word. The roaring waters of the Jordan swelled before them, but they advanced as confidently as if about to ford a babbling brook. As a matter of course, the miracle was forthcoming. *As a matter of course;* for God is a covenant-keeping God, and hope founded on His promises 'maketh not ashamed.'

1. In the application of this rule let us begin at the lower level of life, that is, *secular affairs.* It is possible no doubt for a business man to achieve success of a sort without taking God into his reckoning; but the house which he builds is at best a house of cards. All true and enduring success is won by those whose pathway is under the shadow of Sinai and over the slopes of Olivet. It makes a great difference to a man, in the long run, whether he lives and labours with or without God. Up to a certain point, given ordinary energy, health and opportunity, man is the architect of his own fortunes; but beyond that his success is from above. 'There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will.'

Blessed is the man, in workshop or office, who takes Christ into a silent partnership. Not that a superficial success is impossible without Him; but the highest and best is always a miracle; and the Lord alone can accomplish it. Do your best, use your resources of time and energy to the utmost; and then, without fear or misgiving, look to

Him! Courage *plus* faith is bound to win.

¶ Henry Ford, one of America's wealthiest, most successful and best known business men, in a recent interview with the Editor of a Scottish religious Monthly said: 'I believe in Christ and His way of living and in His teaching. The Sermon on the Mount can be set down in industrial life in any place, and it will work. It is *our* constitution, and it works.' [1]

2. But will the rule apply in the larger provinces, as, for example, in *the pursuit of truth?* Yes, when eyesight fails the veil is lifted. We want to know about God and immortality, about providence and grace, about all the problems of the invisible and eternal life. 'Wisdom is the principal thing.' How shall we attain unto it? If we live up to the full measure of our light, greater light will be given us. The lantern in the hand of the truth-seeker casts its gleam but the length of a single step: nor will it ever shine further, except as he moves on. To him that hath shall be given. 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

He who pursues his quest to the uttermost limit of his present light and stands there in an attitude of faith will find the veil lifting more and more. For truth is a revelation; and revelation is ever a miracle. 'There are . . . so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification'; but the gift of interpretation is for the man of courage and faith. For him there are always 'tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.' He passes on, from truth to truth, as through doors opening one by one, until the last admits him into the ineffable glory.

¶ Here we are in a world of mystery where all is difficult and very much dark—where a hundred jarring creeds declare themselves to be The Truth, and all are plausible. How shall a man decide? Let him *do* the right that lies before him: much is uncertain—some things at least are clear. Whatever else may be wrong it *must* be right to be pure—to be just and tender, and merciful and honest. It *must* be right to love and to deny one's self. Let him do the Will of God, and he shall know. Observe—men begin the other way. They say, If I could but believe, then I would make my life true: if I could but be sure what is truth, then I would set to work to live in earnest. No—God says, Act—make the life true, and then you will be able to believe. Live in earnest, and you will know the answer to 'What is Truth?' [1]

3. Does the rule apply to *character-building?* Yes, here also the rule applies. The high aim of every earnest man is perfection. 'Be ye perfect, saith the Lord, for I am perfect.' In the pursuit of this ambition we have two standards, and both baffle us. There is the Law; and the result is *transgression.* The word is significant: 'crossing the line.' Our other standard is Christ, the ideal Man. We fain would measure up to His stature; but the result is always *short-coming.* What then? Shall we give up, discouraged? Nay; go forward! Go forward till your feet are at the very brink of the waters. Go to your uttermost, and then look to God. The thing which is impossible to you is easy to Him; 'Forget, therefore, the things which are behind and reach forth unto those which are before, and press toward the mark!' This 'mark' is perfection, and God will accomplish it. Not until death, indeed; but then sin will fall away like a garment and we shall be glorified in Him.

It is like the carving of a statue. We strive with hammer and chisel, with infinite pains, day by day, yet our work falls short of our ideal. It lacks something. Touch it; the marble is cold and irresponsive. There is no flush of health, no sparkle of life. But be of good courage: God will touch our best and make it perfect. The cold statue will one day glow with warmth and palpitate with life. We shall be satisfied when we awake in His likeness.

4. Consider next *our service in the Kingdom of Christ.* The secret of success here, also, lies in doing our best and waiting on God.

[1] *The Record,* Jan. 24, 1924, p. 34.

[1] F. W. Robertson.

It is for us to go forth, sowing the seed of the Kingdom; but as to the harvest this is the miracle for which we look to God.

His word to every man is, 'Go work to-day.' There is a place for us in the tillage of the world. Our highest glory is in our appointment to be labourers together with God. 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that.' It is for us to scatter the seed-corn in the furrows and leave the result with God. He must give the dews of heaven, the sunshine, the early and the latter rain. Sowing is man's work; germination is a miracle. But faith sees the miracle aforetime and reckons on it. Faith accepts the promise, 'My word . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.'

¶ I remember many years ago, in early Oxford days, going for a walk with a friend some considerable distance from the university city. In a little hamlet we came across a small chapel—Wesleyan we took it to be. Entering through the open door, we found a poor old woman sweeping the floor and dusting the pews. We began to talk to her; we saw that the little chapel was part of her life; she had been in at the building of it, and she and her husband were at first paid to take care of it. But the population drifted away, the members became very few, she said. Their spirit was very beautiful; they could not afford to pay her and her husband any longer, so she and he did the work for nothing—that is, they did it for God. The husband was called home: she was left alone. She went on with the work. 'When it is too much,' she said, 'a neighbour gives me a helping hand. I am glad to do the work; goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, I shall soon be over the dark river and at home; until then I serve God this way.' That simple old woman was living no narrower life because she had grown poorer and poorer. There was nothing mean about her obscurity; there was something grand in its very simplicity; she had learned the deep secret, the way to master sorrow, the way to make life full and rich and glad. She was actually standing in the middle of Jordan's stream bearing the ark of God upon her shoulder, and probably it was true that many a life was the better and many a crossing the happier because she stood there.[1]

5. And the rule holds good *in the presence of death*. Do you say, 'My life would be full of unalloyed happiness were I not so fearful of death; I tremble whenever I think of it'? Fear not! God parts the waters for His people. Dying grace is given in the hour of need.

March on; you are not the first who has crossed that flood; the great Captain and the great High Priest have gone before you. Change the verb. It is a singular one: Our Captain and our High Priest are one and the same. Jesus went through, yet Jesus stands in our midst, and holds up the ark of the Lord. Do you remember the way that Jesus took when Jordan fronted Him? Setting His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, He saw there only a cross, an agony, a shame; and when loving hearts would have turned Him aside He repelled the temptation, for He knew whence it sprang. 'Get thee behind me!' Calvary was the Jordan of Jesus; He went bravely forward, crossed the river, and then came back and stood in the midst that we might cross under the shadow of the Cross of Calvary.

## The Presence of the Living God.

**Josh. iii. 10.—'Ye shall know that the living God is among you.'**

1. When these words were spoken, the people of God were on the threshold of the greatest crisis that had happened since they became a nation. Their great leader, Moses, was dead; the wilderness life was past; the long-desired Land of Promise, with all its glory and fruitfulness, was partly in view, and certainly within reach. But before they could successfully attain the goal of their pilgrimage and enjoy the full possession of the object they aimed at, there were serious difficulties in the way and sore hindrances to overcome. The path

[1] R. J. Campbell, *Sermons Addressed to Individuals*, 99.

right before them, though the path of duty, seemed quite impassable. Jordan, with its banks inundated, had to be crossed. If that could be traversed there was another obstacle immediately in front. Jericho, the key commanding the passes of Palestine, was blocking the way, with no possibility of retreat. And again, if that could be got over, they would be called upon to face determined and dangerous opposition from the nations of Canaan.

The greatest need was some token of God's presence among them, some assurance that the God of their fathers, the God of the Covenant, was with them to lead and protect them. Hitherto, in their wilderness life, they had had the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night as their guide. Would the same sign of God's love be vouchsafed to them at this critical stage? Or, with such a startling development in the pilgrimage life, involving as it did so great an emergency, would a new method of the manifestation of God's presence be revealed, which, though it might be a greater test to their faith, would be a surer proof that the excellency of the power was of God and not of man (2 Cor. iv. 7); that man's extremity is God's opportunity; that God's strength is made perfect in man's weakness (2 Cor. xii. 9)?

And lo! they were to be preceded by the ark of God alone. And yet this new way of travelling, of passing over, of conquering obstacles was strikingly simple! What! to have an ordinary chest carried at the head of their hosts. Was it not a significant call to faith? Was it not enough that it was God's plan? His word was quite clear: 'Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.' The priests bearing the ark were to march before the people, at the distance of three quarters of a mile, partly to teach them reverence, partly that the ark might be observed as it led the way, and also that it might be quite evident to all that man had no part in the wonderful miracle that was about to be performed except that of prompt obedience to God's command and co-operation with His method of deliverance. So the priests went forward, resting only upon the bare word of God. Obedience, in such circumstances, was indeed hard, especially to those of the people who had not seen the crossing of the Red Sea; but it was rewarded, as it always is, in due time. As soon as 'the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water,' the great volume of the river began to separate into two parts, and they went and stood still but 'firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan,' continuing to bear the ark, until 'all the Israelites passed on dry ground . . . clean over Jordan.'

¶ During the South African war two soldiers were tramping through the night on one of Lord Roberts's great strategic marches. 'What's the use of it?' said one of them wearily, in a complaining spirit. 'Never mind!' replied the other as he stumbled on. 'Come along, mate; Roberts knows!' [1]

2. The children of Israel, ever since they came out of Egypt, had been taught that the living God was among them, and in a measure they had believed it, but now they knew it; and with the assurance of it a new era opened up before them. The last forty years they had been marking time in the wilderness, limiting God by their unbelief, thwarting God's gracious purposes, and robbing themselves of the rest and reward that God had provided for them. The strong arm and outstretched hand with which God had brought them out of Egypt had been fettered and bound by their unbelief; not yet had God begun to cast out their enemies from before them and to give them the promised inheritance. But all was changed now. Jordan was their Rubicon. When they crossed the Jordan they were committed to a new career of conquest and annexation. Pharaoh, with all his host, was swallowed up when they passed through the Red Sea. A greater host was swallowed up when Israel crossed the Jordan—the host of doubts and fears that had dogged their footsteps in the wilderness.

You will never know that the living God is among you as long as you are content to be marking time in the wilderness. If you are

[1] *The Happy Christian*, 26.

prepared to cross the Jordan, if you will leave the wilderness of unbelief, and take the step that commits you to a life of aggression—taking hold of God's promise, and entering into your inheritance—then all doubts and fears will be swallowed up, and you, too, shall know that the living God is among you. But you say, 'Can anything swallow up our doubts and fears? What grave is deep enough to hold them?' Just one grave—the grave out of which Jesus Christ rose victorious on the third day.

Is not that the meaning of the glorious crossing over Jordan? When the great torrent was cut off and held up, in the joy, in the enthusiasm, in the confidence of a new faith, in the glorious expectation of taking possession of what had been promised them all their life long, the people 'hasted to pass over.' The sight of the waters held back gave them the conviction that the living God was among them.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ does the same for us. Not into any shallow overflow but into the very depth of the full torrent of temptation, and sorrow, and suffering, and death, our Emmanuel passed, that our sorrow might be turned into joy. All the waves and billows of God's wrath passed over Him. But His sufferings were not in vain, and death was swallowed up in victory. The flood-tide rolled back before the pierced feet of our Emmanuel. 'He rose again the third day according to the scriptures,' and on the same day He gave a new commission to His Church, and opened up before them a new career of conquest and annexation. To those in the upper room He said, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. . . . Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' On another occasion He gave the same commission in these words: 'All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. . . . Lo, I am with you all the days.'

With us at morning to inspire
  Fresh work, with ever-freshened zest;
At noon-tide, that we may not tire;
  At evening, to restore and rest.

With us, our Master, to command,
  Making it well worth while to live
With daily tasks fresh from Thy hand;—
  With us, our Saviour, to forgive!

Yes, all the days, and all the day,
  To guide, restrain, correct, inspire;
Moulding our wills, Thy willing clay,
  Kindling our hearts, Thy kindred fire.[1]

## The Meaning of a Monument.

(CHILDREN).

Josh. iv. 6.—'What mean ye by these stones?'

Lately we have all been hearing a great deal about monuments. Nearly every town, every village, every church, even every large school has been talking about the monument, the memorial, that it has raised to the memory of its heroes who fell in the Great War.

When we speak of a monument we usually think of something in the way of a tall column, such as the Nelson Monument in Trafalgar Square, London; or of a building not unlike a church spire with a statue in the centre of it, such as Sir Walter Scott's Monument in Princes Street, Edinburgh. But a monument does not need to be made of stone. A monument or memorial sometimes takes the form of a stained-glass window, or a brass tablet, or an organ, or a library, or a bursary, or—but we might go on for an hour suggesting memorials!

Even stone monuments are as varied as the men who designed them. The Pyramids of Egypt, the greatest of which is 7000 years old, are monuments—the largest in the world. The Sphinx is a monument, so is the Arch of Titus in Rome, so is the Arc de Triomphe in Paris; so, too, though their meaning is an enigma, are those great stone circles which the Druids left behind them at Stonehenge and many other places in our Islands. People think that these 'standing stones,' as they are called, must have formed part of a Druid Temple. The men who set them up have left no record of their purpose. Nevertheless they are very real monuments to those who placed them there.

The stones of our text must have been a little like those Druid 'standing stones.' They were rough unhewn boulders taken from the

[1] Mrs. Rundle Charles.

bed of the river Jordan. Twelve men, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, each shouldered a stone and set it up near the spot where the Israelites had crossed, so that their children's children's children, when they looked at these stones and asked, 'What do these mean?' would be told, 'These mean that God held up the waters of the river so that your forefathers might walk over dryshod.'

I said that a monument is not always a stone. To-day I want to speak of two of the most beautiful monuments there are; and neither of them is a stone. Yet, looking at them, we say, 'What mean these?'

The first is a road. In far-off Samoa there is a beautiful road fringed with palm-trees. It leads to a house that is famous all the world over, for it was there that Robert Louis Stevenson, the man who wrote *Treasure Island* and many other fascinating tales, passed the last years of his life.

That road was built for Stevenson by certain of the Samoan chiefs to whom he had been kind. They had been thrown into prison for political reasons, and Stevenson had managed to get them released. When the chiefs were set free, though some of them were old, and some were sick, and the weather was unusually hot, they set to work to make with their own hands this road. It was an offering of gratitude to their friend 'Tusitala,' as they called him. And at a corner of the road they erected a notice bearing their names and reading thus:

'Remembering the great love of his highness Tusitala, and his loving care when we were in prison and sore distressed, we have prepared him an enduring present, this road which we have dug to last for ever.' And at the top of the notice Stevenson put the name of the road—'THE ROAD OF THE LOVING HEART.'

Don't you agree that that was a fine monument? Don't you think anyone looking at that road and reading that notice-board would say, 'Here is a monument which means gratitude and love?'

The last monument I wish to speak of also means love. But it means love greater than the love those chiefs bore to their Tusitala. Yes, and more wonderful still, it means love for you and me.

What is this last splendid monument? It is the Lord's Supper. You know that on His last night on earth Jesus took bread and broke it, and gave to His disciples. He took the cup also and drank of it with them. And He told them that He was going to die for them and for the whole world, and He asked them, when they met together, to break bread in memory of His broken body, and to drink the cup in memory of His shed blood.

And so that monument of the Lord's Supper is seen to-day in every land and every clime. It is seen wherever those who love their Saviour meet. And if anyone asks, 'What mean ye by these?' the answer is, 'We mean love—the love of Christ who died for us, and the love of man for Him who died.'[1]

## A Fair Question.

Josh. iv. 6.—'What mean ye?'

Joshua evidently realized that children would be true to type all the world over, and that it would not be long before they were asking questions. And notice that he was particularly anxious that they should not be put off with an evasive answer. He suggests a form of reply as precise and careful as if it were evidence to be submitted to a Royal Commission. Especially in a question affecting their religious desires and instincts Joshua calls for a clear and unhesitating answer.

Let us restore the simple Hebrew idiom in Joshua's earnest injunction. 'When your children ask to-morrow,' he said, 'you must have an answer for them.' For to-morrow will soon be here; to-morrow with its hopes and fears, with its wistful memories and fond ambitions, to-morrow with its special temptations and peculiar difficulties. Not to-day, perhaps, do they feel the sense of wonder or of need; but to-morrow they will want to know. When life begins to take on a sterner aspect, and your children become conscious of expanding powers within, and of imperious calls; when they feel for the first time, as

[1] *The Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, i. 319.

you have so often felt, the unceasing ache at the heart of things, the never-absent hint of tears in all things human, the wondrous thrill that hushes the spirit to silent adoration in those too rare moments of vision when 'we feel that we are greater than we know'; to-morrow they will want to know what has helped your soul in its testing hours, from what secret springs you have kept faith alive. These religious rites and sacred emblems will suddenly engage the attention of your children, and they will want to know if they can hold for them also any deeper meaning. Why are these things here? What mean ye by them? Have they any meaning at all to-day? Why do you still preserve them? Happy, said Joshua, the child who hears from the lips of his own parents the story of God's grace in a day of stress; how here the dark waters were cloven while the ark of God's faithful covenant passed, and a way was found through the flood that threatened to bar all progress. The memorial stones were taken from the very middle of the bed of the river, where the waters should have been deepest and darkest. What mean ye? To put a meaning into sorrow; to put a meaning into struggle; to put a meaning into that which baffled and bewildered and seemed to hinder; to put a meaning into life, that is, to put God into life—this is the greatest thing you can do for your child.

The question would be sure to be asked, Joshua felt; and he recognized that it was a fair question, calling for a considered answer. 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.' St. Peter, like Joshua, was an eminently practical man. He felt not only that the man of the world would expect the man of faith to have a firmer hold of God than he had himself, but also that he should be eager and glad and ready to impart the secret.

One can imagine a South Sea Islander asking the meaning of those strange red pillar-boxes standing like scattered sentinels about our streets. And we would be ready with our answer. We would explain that much of life —much of the best of life—consists in correspondence with the unseen; that closer than the accident of physical proximity brings us to our neighbour in the street do love and friendship and common interests bind us to one whom, not seeing very often, we love; that the intervention of time and space cannot sunder souls; and that those stout little red boxes are our allies in our defiance of destiny to sunder us; that by getting into the right kind of relation to the powers that be, the whole resources of the king himself and his mighty men are ours, the whole resources of the empire, the complete machinery of foreign governments is at our service, to carry our little missives by land and sea and air. We know quite well what we mean, and are ready to give an answer in some such terms as these.

What of the evidences which still subsist among us that we, or at any rate our fathers, knew that life was a poor thing indeed without the continual commerce with the Unseen? What do we mean by the various exercises of religion whose relics at least are still to be found among us, familiar enough commonplaces of life? Are we ready with the same confident answer when they ask us? Do we know whom we have believed, and are we persuaded? The questioners will learn a lot from the tones in which we answer. 'What you are speaks so loud that I can't hear what you say.' Do they catch our answer? And does it impress them, or carry conviction? Or is there an accent of uncertainty, a note of hesitation?

What mean ye? And when they ask that question they at least pay us the compliment of inferring that our religion does mean something to us. They feel that it must mean something, and they invite us to make our meaning plain. The demand is a reasonable one. And it is as we seek to answer such a searching question that we begin to ask ourselves whether it means enough, and whether it should not have a profounder meaning than it has hitherto had.

Many years ago the late Marquis of Salisbury, who had a most remarkable political prescience and flair for grasping a situation, warned us that the danger to Europe would arise from the dying nations. How amply has his prognostication been fulfilled in our own

day! It is not from the healthy, self-managing peoples that the trouble has broken forth, but from those little states whose names were scarcely known to us, and the determining of whose exact position on the map sends us to our atlas. And so from the unhealthy to the healthy, from the weak to the strong, the contamination of trouble and disaster has spread. The same law holds good even more strikingly and disastrously in the spritual complex. It is a dying faith that is ever the menace of the world's spiritual health. It is when faith is languid and love is cold, when we do not seem to mean very much by our religious profession, and give the impression that we care less; it is when a nation is unable to give a clear, straight answer like that of Joshua to the question, What mean ye? that there is danger in sight, danger to the home-life, danger to the respect that is due from the taught to the teacher, danger to the stability of the social fabric, danger to the laws of the land, danger to the restraints of morality and even of common decency, as well as danger to the honour and glory of Almighty God.

What *do* we mean, now that we have stopped to think about it? Do we mean to play for ever with God and all the sacred things of life, insulting and degrading the very soul of us? Are our children to find out all too soon that we mean little or nothing by our profession of faith? Do we mean for ever to put everything first in our thoughts and in our lives but the claims of God and the promptings of our own better nature? Do we really mean to treat religion only as a pastime during life, and hope to find in it a fire-escape at the end?

The woman whose lone and dangerous expedition of rescue for another in the Tirah hill country has thrilled the world gave the secret of her life and her strength and her salvation in the motto of her martyred missionary husband: 'If the service of God is worth anything, it is worth everything.' We can understand heroic deeds being done in the inspiration of that conviction. We can comprehend how one hundred and twenty praying men and women went forth from an upper room in Jerusalem to 'turn the world upside down,' on the admission of their opponents. 'If the service of God is worth anything, it is worth everything.' That is what life means. That is what faith means. That is what we must convince our children we mean. More we cannot mean: less we dare not.'[1]

## The Land of Struggle.

Josh. v. 13.—'He lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand.'

JOSHUA stands by Jericho—Jordan safely crossed, the hope of years realized, fear fallen upon the Canaanites, the reproach of Egypt rolled away by the sharp knives of Gilgal, the passover duly kept, the manna of the desert exchanged at last for the parched corn of a land inhabited. Might it not be a moment of unmingled complacency? Might not the old warrior repose safely for an hour upon an enterprise assured by promise and splendidly inaugurated? In the knowledge of a Divine Leader and an Omnipotent Presence, would it be strange, would it be wrong, to feel the life's work already as good as done, and to relax something of the long tension of the last forty or forty-five years?

He lifts up his eyes, and there meets him a spectacle corrective of such dreamings—a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand. 'Fighting before resting' is the legend of the vision: and when Joshua accosts the Form with the question, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries—art thou Friend or Foe? the answer is as though he would say, Not this, or that, absolutely; Friend of the fighting man, Foe of the fleeing; Captain of the host of the Lord, and therefore on the side of those, and those only, who are willing to fight under His banner against His enemies and theirs.

The old allegory has taught us to make Jordan death, and Canaan heaven. Yet in reality warfare, not rest, lay for Israel beyond Jordan. Not heaven, but earth, Christian earth, is the true antitype of the Land of Promise. In various ways men have misread this; but all in the direction of a premature repose.

[1] H. L. Simpson, *Put Forth by the Moon*, 861.

(1) Some have thought that the first troubles and pangs of a repentance so sweeping that it was their conversion must surely be followed instantly by an unbroken rest and peace. If they have not found it so, they have much reproached themselves, and been much misgiven. And preachers of the gospel have not been wanting who would make the Christian Canaan a land literally of repose. They have so painted the blessedness of justification as to leave out of sight the gradualness, the difficulty, the precariousness of sanctification. They have said, Salvation lies in belief itself: saving faith is faith in the individual acceptance: to doubt this, to delay the assurance of it, is what Scripture means by unbelief. Once cross the Jordan by appropriating to yourself the atoning work of Christ, you have afterwards but to enjoy—but to maintain that faith in the Atonement—and you are safe for time, safe for eternity. When a man has remonstrated against this doctrine; has said, for example, I doubt not the Saviour's power, I doubt not the Saviour's will, but I doubt very much the depth of my repentance; or, I find myself still the prey of old sins and old inconsistencies, and, while this is so, I cannot merely enjoy, he has been called legal, self-righteous, unbelieving; and another, who had no such scruples, but whose life was far less watchful, self-denying and charitable, has been flattered by the praise of a stronger faith, and by the promise of a higher heaven. No, it is not easy to believe. True faith—the faith by which saints live and die—experiences a thousand doubtings ere it establishes itself for eternity.

¶ I would like to get you to believe, more than I think you do, in the benefits of doubt, and growing light, and half-knowledge, and probabilities and possibilities of things, and all the gradations by which our souls must emerge in this world from dark into daylight; they are all needed in our history, and they stand related to the world of truth now as various degrees of knowledge of our fellow-creatures do to the world of man, from a single nod of acquaintanceship up to the full trust and fellowship of the heart. It was never meant we should have the same certainty about everything in the Bible or out of it. If we could only get to some one centre, and stand there and let the horizon fade away naturally into its own distances. The great centre to me now is Christ; when I feel *that* sure, all is sure, though I cannot pick out its form from mists and twilights and farness, sometimes from glares of glory which do as much to dim the horizon as do vapours.[1]

(2) Others have gone yet further. They have mistaken the passage of the Jordan for the conquest of the Canaanite. They have settled down contentedly among their enemies. The world, the flesh, and the devil have shut themselves up for a day or an hour in their strongholds; and lo, the child of promise thought them extirpated, and never buckled on his armour to fight for his allotment. How true the parable in such cases—the parable that tells of Israel suffering the old inhabitants, and finding them scourges in their sides and thorns in their eyes! Even such, to us, are those old sins, which a false gospel taught us to disregard, and a bitter experience compels us to quake before. Dearly bought are those first few days of unreal security, which we were bidden to regard as the perfection of discipleship. The land into which faith admits us is not all at once a land of repose. It is an exceeding good land, full of grace and comfort and blessing: but it has still to be fought for, with foes not of flesh and blood. For if faith is not easy, neither is holiness. Depend upon it, every man has to fight for that. If not thus, then thus. If not with gross open sins, sins which 'go before unto judgment,' then with subtler, more secret faults: faults of temper and speech, faults of motive and affection, vanities, levities, uncharitableness, worldlinesses; sloth of life and of worship, aversion to duty, ungodliness of spirit. The man who lets himself alone will never be holy. His sins may hide themselves, may convey themselves away, may put on new forms, may leave him often free. For weeks or for years he may lead a quiet life, may be conscious of no attack, may even fancy himself to have overcome: none the less are the old occupants alive and observant; they are but

[1] *Letters of the Rev. John Ker, D.D.*, 91.

beguiling him into a carnal security. Every honest combat with a real sin is worth days and years of a false, because premature, peace. Enough if we know Jesus Christ as able to save to the uttermost, and earnestly commit to Him the charge of our souls and the management of our warfare.

¶ Their indwelling sin is by far the greatest misery of the regenerate.[1]

## The Captain.

Josh. v. 14.—'As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.'

1. Joshua seems to have been privately reconnoitring Jericho, perhaps under shelter of some palm-grove in the suburbs of the city, when he saw this mysterious Warrior at some distance in front of him, with a drawn sword in His hand, like the Angel who met Balaam in the way. Joshua felt no fear, but went up to Him and asked Him whether He was a friend or an enemy. He made answer that He was 'the Prince of the army of Jehovah,' that is, of the angelic host; and these words, together with the majesty of His bearing, led Joshua to prostrate himself before Him.

Who was this wonderful military Stranger? Surely none other than the uncreated Angel of the Covenant, the Lord of the angels, He whom all the angels of God worship. It was Jehovah Himself who had come to visit Joshua, as He had appeared in patriarchal times to Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses. The same Angel had gone before the children of Israel for forty years in the pillar of cloud and fire. At the Red Sea, on the night of the Exodus, He had delivered the nation of bondmen from Pharaoh and his host; and now He appears as the Heavenly Leader of Israel in the conquest of the land of Canaan. He promises Joshua a certain and easy victory over the king and the people of Jericho. He tells him that that stronghold is to fall, not by military skill and valour, but by Divine power.

How encouraged and comforted Joshua must have felt after this wonderful interview! We know how bravely he went forward to the conquest of the whole land, as the commissioned lieutenant of the Heavenly Captain. He turned neither to the right hand nor to the left. He never doubted or wavered for a moment. And always as he boldly advanced at the head of the invading army, from Gilgal to Jericho, from Jericho to Ai, from Ai to Gibeon, from Gibeon to Beth-horon, and from Beth-horon to Merom, Joshua's faith saw the celestial Captain leading him on. He saw always, moving in front of him, that drawn and glittering sword which he had seen for the first time among the palms near Jericho. 'For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.'

2. Both in heathen history and in Christian history outside of the Bible there are parallels to this conception of a heavenly prince or captain going before the army, and securing for it a glorious victory.

(1) One of the great temples which were the glory of the Forum of ancient Rome was that of the Twin Gods, Castor and Pollux, who were the patrons of the Roman knights, and the protectors of sailors. Three magnificent pillars of that temple still stand, these being regarded as among the most beautiful architectural remains of the ancient city. The temple was opened in the year 484 B.C., in commemoration of the battle of Lake Regillus, which had been fought twelve years earlier at some distance to the south-east of Rome. In that battle the Romans had defeated the Latins with great slaughter; and it was the popular belief at Rome that the great issue of the day had been decided by supernatural agency. The people ascribed the victory to the favour of the Twin Gods, Castor and Pollux, who had appeared, armed and mounted on white horses, at the head of the legions of the Republic, had scattered the Latins in all directions, and had carried the news of the victory with lightning speed to the city. The temple was afterwards built near the well in the Forum at which they had alighted, and where they had washed their horses. Lord

[1] A. Whyte, *Thirteen Appreciations*, 174.

Macaulay says of the Twin Gods in his *Lay* concerning the battle—

So like they were, no mortal
Might one from other know:
White as snow their armour was:
Their steeds were white as snow.
Never on earthly anvil
Did such rare armour gleam;
And never did such gallant steeds
Drink of an earthly stream.

(2) The patron saint of Spain is St. James the Greater, whom Herod Agrippa put to death; that is, James, the brother of John. In his lifetime, as Edward Gibbon has said, James was a peaceful fisherman of the Lake of Galilee; but the Spaniards have transformed him into a valorous soldier, who has appeared on many occasions mounted on a white horse, and leading the armies of Spain to victory against their infidel foes. For example, in the year 841, when the Spaniards were fighting the Moors at Clavijo, and the day seemed to be going hard against the Christians, St. James appeared in the battlefield, riding on a white charger, and armed with a powerful sword. He slew sixty thousand Moors, and won the way for Spain and for Christianity. Again, even as late as the sixteenth century, it seems to have been believed by many superstitious persons that Cortes, the Spanish conqueror of Mexico, had the aid of St. James in one of his engagements against the Indians. It was affirmed that the Apostle had been seen riding on a grey-coloured horse at the head of the troops from Castile.

These are two sets of legends, one Roman, the other Spanish; and they are nothing more, except that they indicate some sort of faith in the unseen and in the future life. But we know that in the long campaigns of the Christian Church against evil the Captain of our salvation always advances at the head of His own sacramental host. 'The Lord shall be seen over them,' as if fighting from heaven in their behalf.[1]

[1] C. Jerdan.

With force of arms we nothing can,
Full soon were we down-ridden;
But for us fights the proper Man,
Whom God Himself hath bidden.
Ask ye who is this same?
Christ Jesus is His name,
Of Sabaoth the Lord,
Sole God to be adored,
'T is He must win the battle.

## Holy Ground.

**Josh. v. 15.—'Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.'**

THE ground on which Joshua stood was no sacred place in the ordinary meaning of the term. It was the ground over which he was to pass to his first battle. It would seem that he had gone out by himself to examine it beforehand. 'And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot: for the place whereon thou standest is holy.' The Divine guidance is given only to reverence and awe. We mark our battlefields with a cross after the event. We need to recognize beforehand the holiness of the ground on which human forces are to contend.

1. In order that we may pierce beneath the outward show of things, let us analyse the effect upon a strong and good man of being entrusted with a new and difficult and responsible task.

On the one hand, the new claim draws out whatever is strongest and bravest in him: it equips him with the moral weapons of hopefulness and determination, it reveals unsuspected resources of power, it calls into play faculties which had been trained without his being

aware of them: he is more and greater than he knew. On the other hand, he recognizes more than before his limitations: he sees the necessity for correcting many shortcomings and developing capacities for which hitherto he had no employment; he is struck with remorse for neglected opportunities, he is moved to regret the carelessness of his self-discipline, he feels with sadness how much more he could do now, if only he were a better man: in a word, he is humbled. The consciousness of strength and the sense of humility are not inconsistent: they are evoked simultaneously by a new call of responsibility.

2. To the religious man who has learned something of the hallowing of life the acceptance and fulfilment of such a responsibility will influence the intercourse of his soul with God in two directions.

The opportunity of high service is in itself a subject of thankfulness to God: to be called to difficult and strenuous exertion is honour and privilege. Moreover the consciousness of power issues for a true man not in foolish pride, but in gratitude and a desire for fuller consecration.

But again, the remembrance of past failures, the feeling of unworthiness, the sense of insufficiency for the task, combine to produce penitence, lowliness of spirit, and dependence upon God. The very thought that God deigns to use us after all, that the call comes from God and is a pledge of God's presence and assistance, deepens these feelings. And the first difficulties which check us do not stagger us, but sober us, and make us yet more penitent, more lowly, and more dependent upon God.

3. The joint result of these mingled feelings is the prostration of our souls before God, first to thank Him for calling us to His service and endowing us with powers to serve Him; then to humble ourselves before Him on account of those sins which sorely let and hinder us in running the way of His commandments; and then to implore His continual help to further our endeavours and grant us good success. We have heard, as we went forth to survey the work that lay before us, the voice that says, 'Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.' This, surely, is the spirit in which any Christian man must meet new responsibility of an arduous kind; and it is thus that he must comfort himself, as he learns to appreciate his task, and finds perhaps that it is more trying and more costly than he had supposed.

The thing that pleaseth Thee—be that my pleasure!
And in Thy Holy Will be my delight;
Each blest command of Thine, Lord, would I treasure,
And do those things most pleasing in Thy sight.
Oh grant, Lord, that in heart with Thee ascended,
My life below Thine honour may acclaim;—
My work may be begun, continued, ended,
All to the glory of Thy Holy Name.[1]

## A Victory of Faith.

Josh. vi. 16.—'Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.'

THE capture of Jericho was a victory of faith. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, 'By faith the walls of Jericho fell down' (xi. 30). Let us notice some of the characteristics of this faith; for the siege of Jericho was, after all, a typical siege. 'For we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds),' and 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'

1. Notice first the *adventure* of faith. Someone has said there are three kinds of faith. The faith that *receives*—the faith by which we are saved: 'As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God' (John i. 12). The faith that *reckons*—the faith by which we are sanctified: 'In that he died, he died unto sin once. . . . Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God' (Rom. vi. 10, 11). But there is a higher faith still—the faith that

[1] M. Hitchin-Kemp, *The Ideal of Sympathy*, 88.

*risks,* illustrated in the conduct of the men and women who crossed the Jordan and laid siege to Jericho. When they crossed the river they burned all their boats and bridges behind them. They had no homes into which they could retire; no fortresses to which they could retreat; it was to them victory or death, and this adventure of faith God always honours.

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, speaking of those who risked their homes, possessions, reputation, loved ones, yea, life itself—men and women of whom the world was not worthy—the writer says: These all had 'witness borne to them through their faith' (*v.* 39). Their faith was of such a strength that there was something in it for God to bear witness to. How can God attest a faith that is timid and fearful, that is so largely mixed with unbelief that it is hard to say which is the stronger element?

¶ Some two years before George Müller passed away, I had a long conversation with him, and heard from his own lips the story of the testing of his faith in the earlier years of his great enterprise. He told me how sometimes at night the larders and storerooms of the orphanage were quite empty. There was no flour or bread, nor was there any money in hand to purchase the morning's breakfast, and George Müller never went into debt. Yet he went to rest and slept as sweetly as if the storerooms were full of food. It is quite conceivable that his sleep would have been disturbed had he not learned the secret of testing God so absolutely that he passed into the orphanage accounts the whole of the million and a half pounds sterling that passed through his hands. George Müller loved to test God, and God loved to bear witness to his faith. 'Did the children ever have to go without their breakfast?' I asked. 'Never,' the old saint replied; 'the only thing that ever happened was that one morning the breakfast was half an hour late.' In these days of doubt and of make-believe, let us cultivate the adventure of faith.[1]

2. Another characteristic is the *obedience* of faith. In obedience the Israelites were circumcised; in obedience they ate the Passover; in obedience they crossed the Jordan; 'as the Lord commanded them, so did they.' The secret of Joshua's victory at Jericho was his prompt and unquestioning submission to the captaincy of the Lord of Hosts. This implicit obedience to the will of another marked all his arrangements for the siege. Minute instructions were given as to the plan of attack. They were to march in a certain order—the armed men, the priests with their trumpets of ram's horns and the ark of God—all were to take the position assigned to them. At the command of the Lord they were to be silent, and at His command they were to shout; there was no room for self-will or for any programme of human devising. The result was a victory complete and decisive.

In the two last chapters of Exodus the phrase 'As the Lord commanded Moses' occurs no fewer than eighteen times. He set up the veil, 'as the Lord commanded Moses'; he set the bread upon the table, 'as the Lord commanded Moses'; he lighted the lamps, 'as the Lord commanded Moses'; he burnt sweet incense on the altar, 'as the Lord commanded Moses.' 'Thus did Moses according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.' 'So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.' Why do so many Christians seem to lack a similar token of the Divine appropriation and approval, for not by any means upon all who bear Christ's name does the Spirit of glory and of God rest? Is it not because there is often carelessness in little things? We forget that there is nothing trivial with God, and that He expects the utmost fidelity, thoroughness, and exactitude from us. The gloom that is so often caused by disobedience will give place to the glory which irradiates the very countenance, if in all things we are obedient to the voice of God.

3. Another characteristic is the *discipline* of faith. 'Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor let your voice be heard, neither shall any word proceed out

[1] J. G. Mantle.

of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.' Their silence was as necessary as their shouting, and silence is harder than shouting. Do not forget that these men were the descendants of the greatest grumblers who ever lived. Their fathers were always either complaining, or criticising, or censuring, until at last God swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. It speaks much for the spiritual calibre of their sons that they submitted willingly to such discipline as this. How much mischief would have been wrought had each man felt free to express his opinion as to the strategy Joshua employed! One would have said that nothing more childish had ever been attempted in the history of the world; the way to reduce Jericho was by sapping and mining. Another would have suggested the planting of huge catapults on the neighbouring hills, in order to batter down the gates. Another would have expressed it as his opinion that their only hope of victory lay in a protracted siege and a slow process of starvation.

How often, in our work to-day, are the sinews of faith cut by injudicious and unkindly criticism, and by the ventilation of God-dishonouring doubts. If the people who do little else but criticize their ministers would only pray for them; if those who are chronic doubters would only keep their doubts to themselves—or, better still, if they would only allow themselves to be transformed into chronic believers—how different would be the atmosphere in which much Christian work is done.

¶ Don't be criticizing the finger that points the road, and forget to take the journey. Don't say to the finger-post, 'You should have been higher and broader.' Go the road! That is what you have to do. The devil could have no greater joy—a grim and terrible joy is his—than to find you quarrelling with the guide, quarrelling with the index-finger, and not walking one step of the road.[1]

4. Another characteristic is the *patience* of faith. 'And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early, at the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.' Thirteen times they must compass the city before the command to shout can be given. How this illustrates the patience of faith! There is something harder even than believing: it is *waiting*. 'It is good that a man should both hope and *quietly wait* for the salvation of the Lord' (Lam. iii. 26). 'Since the beginning of the world men have not . . . seen a God beside thee, which worketh for him that *waiteth* for him' (Isa. lxiv. 4). May not the reason why your Jericho has not fallen be that you have not compassed it thirteen times? Many a mother has given up praying for her boy when the victory was almost in sight. She thought the walls would never fall, but the excessive perverseness of the prodigal was only the last struggle of the enemy to keep possession of his prey.

¶ George Müller told me of one man for whose conversion he had prayed for fifty-two years. He said, 'I have prayed for him every day, at home and abroad, on land and on sea. I prayed for him this morning, and I thanked God for his conversion; and I shall do the same again to-morrow.' Who is surprised to know that the walls of that Jericho fell three months after George Müller was laid in his grave? Perfect victory comes sooner or later to every soul who works under the Divine direction and in the Divine energy. It matters little if we have to die, as George Müller did, before *the seventh day* arrives; we shall have had our share in the triumph all the same. It may be that over the green grass that covers your grave your boy will think on his ways and turn his feet into God's testimonies. What we have to remember is this: 'They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.'[1]

5. The last characteristic is the *appropriation* of faith. In verse 1 we have Jericho as it appeared to the eye of sense: 'Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.'

[1] Joseph Parker.

[1] J. G. Mantle.

In verse 2 we have Jericho as it appeared to the eye of faith: 'And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.' Note the words, 'I have given.' But the victory was conditioned on their compassing the city thirteen times; in other words, it depended on the appropriation of faith. 'Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon that have I given unto you,' said God. They must appropriate by faith what God gave. Every step was a step of appropriation, and when the end of the thirteenth journey drew near, the faces of the enemy were suddenly blanched with terror and dismay, for at the blast of the trumpets the people shouted such a shout that the walls were carried away under it (see AV margin), and the deriding foe was buried in the ruins.

¶ Dr. Moffat laboured for many years among the Bechuanas, and won not a single soul for his hire. On receiving a message from England, 'What shall we send you for Christmas?' he answered, 'Send me a Communion service.' His appropriating faith was abundantly rewarded, for when the Communion service arrived there were many who sat with the missionary around the table of the Lord to eat of the bread and to drink of the cup in remembrance of Him. 'Whatsoever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye *have received it* and ye shall have it.' [1]

## The Capture of Jericho.

Josh. vi. 20.—'So the people shouted, and the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, that the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him.'

1. Jericho, palm-girt, standing out clear-cut in the pure air and under the deep blue of the sky, in front of the vast precipice of rock down which the road descended from Jerusalem, was filled with many thoughts, chief among which was faint-heartedness. There was no mustering of forces; no issuing forth of the men of war; no sudden night attack upon that host which lay along the Jordan bank, its brown tents pitched around the central pavilion or tabernacle of God. It was as though some mysterious spell had fallen upon king and people, unnerving them, impelling them to stand upon the defensive and await the unfolding of events. 'Their hearts melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.'

Israel, on the other hand, was probably impatient, eager to be led to the conflict. The men of war, confident in their might, were eager to match themselves against the inhabitants of the land, and to wipe out in blood the memory of their fathers' defeat at Hormah. Conscious that the passage of the Jordan had been due to the presence of the priests, it may have been that there was a secret desire in their hearts to show that the time had come for the priests to stand aside, whilst they proved their prowess and won the land by might.

But they had to learn that the land was a gift, to be received by faith, not won by effort. God required of them only to obey, and wait, and trust, whilst the Divine Captain led His celestial hosts to the assault, and achieved the victory. 'And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. And ye shall compass the city, all the men of war going about the city once.'

It certainly was the strangest spectacle ever witnessed by a beleaguered garrison. The besiegers did not make an assault, or rear mounds, or place scaling ladders against the walls. They did not, indeed, afford an opportunity for parley or discussion of terms of capitulation. On each side it seems to have been understood that the war would be to the knife—no quarter asked, no mercy shown. Without delay the host of Israel began encompassing the city. 'Ye shall encompass the city.' May it not rather be said that *the ark* encompassed the city, and that the men of war accompanied it? For in each case, whether the directions were given to Joshua by the Captain, or by Joshua to the host, the particular position of the ark was minutely specified. Indeed, as Joshua came from the Divine interview he appears to have first summoned the priests

[1] J. G. Mantle.

into his presence, and given them his instructions. After this, he turned to the people generally. There is a remarkable emphasis in the words, 'He caused the ark of the Lord to compass the city.'

It was but a little after dawn. The sun had not mounted far above the eastern horizon. Blue blended with amber in the morning sky. Towards the south the mountains of Moab stood like a mighty rampart, veiled in violet, while the sullen waters of the Dead Sea gleamed like silver at their foot. The belt of desert sand added its dark red to the variegated colours of the picture, contrasting notably with the emerald green of the oasis in which Jericho stood. Then from out the camp of Israel a long procession began to unwind itself. First the men of war, marching beneath their tribal banners; then seven priests, white-robed, blowing with seven trumpets of rams' horns; next the ark of God, hidden by its coverings from the gaze of Israelite and Canaanite alike; and lastly the tribe of Dan, bringing up the rear.

Towards the city this strange procession made its way, preserving an absolute silence, save that the priests went on continually blowing with the trumpets. With that exception no other sound was heard. No challenge! No taunt! No cry as of them that shout for mastery! The whole host wound silently around the city, like some serpent with sinuous folds; and when the circuit was completed, to the surprise of the Canaanites, who probably expected an immediate assault, it returned quietly to the camp from which it had emerged an hour or two before. And the rest of the day passed without further incident. 'So they did six days.'

On the seventh day, the circuit of the walls was repeated seven times. And at the close of the seventh, Joshua's voice rang out on the still evening air the command, 'Shout! for the Lord hath given you the city.' Then the priests blew a blast upon the trumpets; the people shouted with a great shout that reverberated through the hills around, and was perhaps answered by the feebler voices of the women and children from the camp; and the wall of Jericho fell down flat, so that the people could go up into the city, 'every man straight before him,' 'and they took the city.'

2. That is the story: how are we to understand it? A writer in the *Expository Times* (xviii. 464) suggests that the hand of Joshua and his army was in it as well as the hand of God. Let us consider, he says, that the daily march of the besiegers round the walls was a feint to divert attention from the main attack, and that meanwhile mines were being driven beneath the fortifications by the Israelites not in one place only, but from several points at once. If we read the story with this consideration in mind the whole account becomes intelligible. The silence of the first six days would mystify and further alarm the defenders, and the great shout and the blare of trumpets would be the preconcerted signal to the sappers to knock away or set fire to all the supporting beams simultaneously. The statement, too, that 'the people went up into the city, every man straight before him,' seems to imply that the storming parties were ready at their posts. The falling of the walls at the sound of the trumpet would thus form the fitting and dramatic end of a difficult and dangerous operation carried to a triumphant conclusion by the grace of God and the devotion of His people.

He admits that there is no evidence that directly supports this theory. On the other hand, there is no evidence against it: it is not confronted with any technical or historical difficulty, and parallels are easily found; lastly it enables us to receive a clear statement of fact in Old Testament history. Mining was a plan of attack well known to the Egyptians, and if any place were likely to familiarize the Hebrews further with the idea, it would be the Sinai peninsula, where in many districts the rocks are tunnelled for torquoise or copper. The mining would be the first incident to disappear from both the priestly and the popular account; but even from the ethical point of view the narrative gains in dignity if the victory was due not to Divine intervention on behalf of a shiftless folk, but to the fact that, while Joshua and his people put their trust in God, they were also 'strong and very courageous.'

For the device of mining while the attack on the city was apparently being pressed in the ordinary manner, compare the siege of Acre when the Christians were finally driven out of Palestine. For the dramatic effect, a native tower that had to be destroyed in the Tirah campaign was mined with gunpowder and blown up at the sound of four bugles. The *Times* remarked it was like the siege of Jericho: it was not noticed that the converse might also be true.

3. However that may be, certain it is that in the narrative itself the impressive fact is the presence of God. Why did the people of Jericho make no sortie? Why were they so fearful? Behind the Israelites' army they saw the power of the Israelites' God. In the Great War the most unaccountable event was the failure of the Germans to break through the thin British line at the first battle of Ypres. They were seven to one: and into the British line had rushed the kitchen servants. Margaret L. Woods has turned the story into poetry. In doing so she says: 'The poem on the first battle of Ypres was not in any way suggested by the Angels of Mons fable, but by a private letter. The writer, a young man of high character and intelligence, was acting as interpreter at the time of the battle. He questioned a considerable number of prisoners as to the cause of the apparently inexplicable withdrawal of the Germans on three occasions. The reply was always the same, "We dared not advance when we saw your immense reserves." '

It was the Emperor launched on us his guard of old renown,
Stepping in parade-march, as they stepped through Berlin town,
On the chill road to Gheluveldt, in the dark before the dawning.

Heavily tolled on them
Mortal mouths of guns,
Gallantly, gallantly
Came the flower of the Huns.

Proud men they marched, like an avalanche on us falling,
Prouder men they met, in the dark before the dawning.
Seven to one they came against us to shatter us and drown,
One to seven in the woodland we fought them up and down,
In the sad November woodland, when all the skies were mourning.

The long battle thundered till a waxing moon might wane.
Thrice they broke the exhausted line that held them on the plain,
And thrice like billows they went back, from viewless bounds retiring.

Why paused they and went backward,
With never a foe before,
Like a long wave dragging
Down a level shore

Its fierce reluctant surges, that came triumphant storming
The land, and powers invisible drive to its deep returning?
On the grey field of Flanders again and yet again,
The Huns beheld the Great Reserves, on the old battle-plain,
The blood-red field of Flanders, where all the skies were mourning.[1]

4. The capture of Jericho was by miracle. And we can discover good reasons for the first incident in the campaign being marked by miracle. The fact that it was the first is a reason. In God's progressive revelation each new stage is inaugurated by miracles, which do not continue throughout its course. For instance, in the Acts, the first example of each class of incidents recorded there, such as the first preaching, the first persecution, the first martyrdom, the first expansion of the gospel beyond the Jew, its first entrance into Europe, has the stamp of miracle impressed on it and is narrated in detail, while other events of the same kind have neither of these distinctions. The first martyr, for example, saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. We do not read that the heavens

[1] Margaret L. Woods, *The Return*, pp. vii, 45f.

opened when Herod slew James the brother of John with the sword, but was Jesus the less near to help His servant? In like manner, it was fitting that the first occasion on which Israel crossed swords with the dreaded enemies should be marked by a miraculous intervention to hearten God's warriors.

But the supernatural intervention then was not meant to divide off that occasion from common life as exceptionally favoured, but rather to unveil, in a manner adapted to sense, the perennial fact of God's presence with His servants when no miracle announces that He is near. The miracle is a transient revelation of an eternal fact. It does not empty the 'natural order' of God, but declares it to be full of Him. It hallows the common by showing for a moment its usually unseen source. The Cause of causes and the effect are brought close together in the miracle, that we may understand that, even when a chain of many links intervenes between them, it is the energy of the Divine Cause that ever produces the 'natural' effect. In miracle God makes bare His arm that we may be better able to trace it; it is draped and partially hid, as by a vesture, by the natural order. God is as much with us in our struggles as He was with the Israelites when they marched round Jericho, and He will help us as really as He helped them, and, if we patiently obey and do the weary day's duty, even when it is protracted and seems to be producing no result, we too shall know the rapture of the sudden victory.

## Ai.

Josh. vii. 4.—'They fled before the men of Ai.'

Jericho was now in ruins, and Israel must press on to other victories. Had Jericho been the capital of the land, its fall would have been the signal for a wide submission. But Canaan was broken up into many petty kingships, and Jericho with its suburbs was but one of these. So the conquest of Jericho was not final; it left the other cities unsubdued; and the first to oppose the march of Israel was the little highland town of Ai. It had a familiar ring for Joshua, that name. It mingled with boyish memories of the story of Abraham (Gen. xii. 8). And when Joshua heard that yonder town to the west was Bethel, how near him it must have brought the God of Jacob! Ai, then, must be taken next; and Joshua, acting on his scouts' advice, sent some three thousand men to the assault.

But if Jericho, which seemed impregnable, had fallen, Ai, which looked an easy capture, stood fast. The hardy townsmen did not await attack. They sallied out of the ports as the Israelites were clambering up the hill, and in the swift impetuousness of their charge, as before the torrent of a highland river, they swept their foes down the slope into the quarries. It was a terrible check to these victorious arms. It staggered the faith of all, even of Joshua. We do not wonder to find Joshua, with rent clothes and dust upon his head, lying on his face before the Lord. Then Joshua learned the secret of the failure. The Captain of the armies of the Lord had sheathed His sword because Jehovah's covenant had been broken. And what the sin was that had angered God, and how the guilt of it was fixed on Achan, and how Achan was punished in the valley—all this is written for us in the strong and simple words of Scripture.

1. Now let us learn some lessons, and, first, *the peril of our victories.* After Jericho, Ai must have looked a petty place. Compared with those mighty walls that had seemed to rise to heaven, the battlements of Ai were as nothing. Flushed with their victory, heated with the slaughter, the Israelites needed no miracle to capture Ai. There was little necessity for calling upon God to help them to win a little place like that. Three thousand men will do it, said the spies. Then let three thousand men be sent, said Joshua. But of earnest prayer to God for victory, and of cries for help to the Man with the drawn sword, there is never a whisper in the story. And that is the constant peril of our triumphs. They make us confident and self-assertive. Our heart is throbbing, our arm is strong, we almost forget our need of God to-day. So God rebukes His children, lifts up the cup of failure to their lips, scatters them on the hills and through

the quarries; until, like Joshua and all the elders, and all the apostles and disciples too, they learn that 'without me ye can do nothing'.

¶ I felt all through the Jubilee celebrations that there was too much of national pride and self-laudation: too much of the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar when he said: 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' We all know the reply of the 'Heavenly Majesty': 'There fell a voice from heaven saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; Thy kingdom is departed from thee' (Dn. iv. 30, 31).

Far be it from me to imply that our gracious Sovereign had even a particle of that vaunting spirit. No one ever set a finer example of humble duty based upon reverence for the Most High. But it is beyond doubt that the two Jubilees of 1887 and 1897 flaunted the greatness of the British Empire in the eyes of the world, and did not a little to stir up that foreign envy and jealousy which flamed to such a height in the South African War. It also produced a burst of national pride which in all ages has usually been the precursor of humbling reverses. I believe in the inexorable character of the moral law, and one of its basal principles is that 'pride goeth before a fall.'[1]

2. Note, too, that *the blame of our failures may lie at our own doors.* When the three thousand fled and the thirty-six were slain, Joshua went straight to God about it, and he did well. But read his prayer, and you will catch a strange note in it—Joshua *reproaches God.* Why hast Thou brought us here? Why art Thou going to destroy us? Why were we not content to dwell across the Jordan?—as if the power of God had not been seen at Jericho. Then Joshua learned— and none but a loving Father would have so taught him—that the blame lay not in heaven, but at his door. It was not God who was responsible for the flight; it was sin in the camp of Joshua that had caused it. Blame not the promises, charge not that sad disaster to the Throne: the secret of failure lies in the tents of Israel! How prone we still are, when we are worsted, to carry the blame of it too far away! How ready, in every fault and every failure, to trace the source of it anywhere but in ourselves! In spiritual defeats never accuse another. Never cry out against the name of God. It is in the tented muster of my heart, and in the things buried and stamped under the ground there, that the secret of my moral disaster lies.

3. Again, we learn *the power of one man to infect a whole community* and to inflict disaster on it. One sick sheep taints a flock. The effects of the individual's sin are not confined to the doer. We have a fine new modern word to express this solemn law, and we talk now of 'solidarity,' which sounds very learned and 'advanced.' But it means just what we see in this story; Achan was the sinner, all Israel suffered. We are knit together by a mystical but real bond, so that 'no man,' be he good or bad, 'liveth to himself,' and no man's sin terminates in himself. We see the working of that unity in families, communities, churches, nations. Men are not merely aggregated together like a pile of cannon balls, but are knit together like the myriad lives in a coral rock. Put a drop of poison anywhere, and it runs by a thousand branching veins through the mass, and tints and taints it all. No man can tell how far the blight of his secret sins may reach, or how wide the blessing of his modest goodness may extend. We should seek to cultivate the sense of being members of a great whole and to ponder our individual responsibility for the moral and religious health of the church, the city, the nation. We are not without danger from an exaggerated individualism, and we need to realize more constantly and strongly that we are but threads in a great network, endowed with mysterious vitality and the power of transmitting electric impulses, both of good and of evil.

[1] Samuel Smith, *My Life-Work*, 243.

## Prayer and Action.

Josh. vii. 10.—'And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?'

Israel had just experienced a great defeat; and that, too, at the hands of an almost contemptible foe. Strong in the Lord's protection, and in their own vastly superior numbers, they had sent against the little town of Ai a detachment of 3,000 men, which they deemed more than sufficient to destroy it; and, instead of the easy victory they had reckoned on, they had suffered an ignominious defeat. 'Wherefore,' says the sacred writer, 'the hearts of the people were melted, and became as water.' Now in a strait like this, what was the 'religious exercise' that would seem most fitting for Joshua? As we should expect, he rent his clothes, and fell upon his face in prayer before the ark of the Lord. And the Lord's answer is given in the words of the text, 'Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?'

1. The answer sounds strange at first. God almost rebukes Joshua for praying. He gives him back his own 'wherefore' in the question that sounds so harsh, 'Wherefore art thou thus fallen upon thy face?' But the harshness is only apparent, and serves to point the lesson that follows—that the cause of the disaster is with Israel, not with God, and that therefore the remedy is not in prayer, but in active steps to cast out 'the unclean thing.'

It is as if God would teach Joshua, and would teach us, that even prayer becomes almost a sin when the occasion demands action. For, indeed, right action is a prayer, and one of the noblest forms of prayer. In the Middle Ages, those who made it the first object of their lives to save their own souls used to shut themselves up in monasteries, where they might offer up the sacrifice of devotion night and day; and often they almost seemed to themselves to be losing their chance of heaven if, to perform the necessary duties of the house and garden they missed even one of the endless round of services; so that their Abbots were compelled to teach them that phrase which has become a proverb ever since, 'Labour is a kind of prayer.' We may be expressing our devotion to our Master just as truly, just as completely, by rightly discharging even the most menial duties as by lying prostrate before His altar. Nay, more, at times even this, which we deem the highest act of devotion, may become a snare to us, if it leads us to neglect or ignore the not less necessary duties of practical life. It may be that God may have to say to us in such a case, as He said to Joshua, and as He has said to countless selfish religionists in all ages, if they had but listened, even as they prostrated themselves in ecstasy of devotion before His altar, 'Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?'

2. We are all too apt to look upon what we call our religious duties as something apart from our daily life. We are apt to slide into the mere politician's distinction between matters 'secular' and matters 'religious.' This or that, we say, is a 'religious' question, and may be settled by reference to God and the ideals of religion; but this other is a purely 'secular' question, and can be judged by the standard of the world. Now, as a simple matter of fact, any such distinction as this is everlastingly impossible. If religion is, as it is, the art of being and doing good, there is no action whatever that is not, in a sense, religious. If a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing 'as unto the Lord.' It follows from all this that there is no sphere of action that has not a religious side—that is not strictly speaking, religious.

We must set ourselves, as Christians, to try what we can do to improve the surroundings of our less fortunate brethren, to provide for them such conditions of life as shall make cleanliness and decency, and consequently health and immunity from disease, at least possible to them. They are only too often thriftless, drunken, and uncleanly, as it would seem, by their very nature. But have we ever wondered, when we think this, what we should be in the same surroundings? Have we ever wondered how far the den he lives in goes to form the drunkard? how far his style of

home drives him to the life of a pig? Do you remember those words which Dickens puts into the mouth of one of his characters, 'What use is it, missionary, to come to me in this foul place? Give me my first glimpse of heaven through a little of its light and air; help me to be clean; give me pure water; lighten this heavy atmosphere and this heavy life; and then I will hear of Him Whose thoughts were so much with the poor, and Who had compassion on all human sorrow'. We leave men to live in dens like brutes, and wonder that they are not men. And yet it is true that they are our brothers and sisters, that they and we are members of one body; and there is one way God has of proving it to us quite unmistakably, when all others fail.

¶ A wise man tells a story of a poor destitute Irish widow in Edinburgh, seeking for help from her brother men; but no one had mercy on her, no one would help her, until from starvation and bad lodging, as the doctor said, she took typhus fever, and not merely died herself, but infected the whole town, and seventeen persons died with her. 'There was no way left for her,' says the wise man, 'to prove her sisterhood except by killing seventeen of them with fever.'[1]

## Flattery and Falsehood.

Josh. ix. 9.—'And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come, because of the name of the Lord thy God.'

Of all the vivid and dramatic stories that come to us out of this Book of Joshua there is none more vivid, and more full of realistic touches, than this story of the deception of the children of Gibeon. Like one of those pictures of the ancient masters, who knew how to mix their colours so that their colours stand to-day on the canvas as bright and clear as on the day when they were first laid on, so the incidents in this story stand out before us as vividly and as brightly almost as in the day when first they were told. We see the whole course of that plot. We see the dismay and terror that seized the Gibeonites when the news of the fall of Jericho and Ai had reached them; we see them laying their heads together to devise some means by which they may escape from the threatened doom; we see the gleam of light flash over their faces as the device that they carried out comes into the mind of some of them; we see them collecting all the old garments and shoes and wine-skins that they can gather from any rubbish-heap, and then sending the men forth, fully primed as to the part they were going to play and the drama they were to act. And we see them coming to Joshua, and we watch them flatter the Israelites until they have taken all the wit out of them; and then we see, when the brief respite of three days is over, the discovery, the exposure, the declaration of the real truth, and the wrath and indignation of Israel, and the terror of those who had deceived her.

It is not a beautiful story. It is very like life, though it is a story full of deception and chicanery, of craft and of guile, lit up by just one bright and glorious flash of nobility, when we see how Joshua and the princes were, in spite of all inducements to the contrary, faithful to their word.

1. Notice, first, how a good man may lapse. We are astonished that a man like Joshua could have made the mistake he did, that he took not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. Here was a man who had been schooled, one would think, to the habit of waiting upon God; one who, through his life, as we read it, was accustomed to bring his troubles, his cares, his uncertainties to God, to lay everything before Him and to wait for His guidance; and here at a crisis the good habit breaks down and he makes this sad blunder.

We read at times of men who are accomplished speakers, accustomed to address vast audiences, suddenly stopping in the mid-current of their speech while their audience waits for two or three painful moments of suspense until the tired brain can work again, and the broken and dropped thread of thought be once more picked up. We know these moments in the spiritual life. We know how true this picture is to life, we know how often it is the case that men whom one would expect to act differently, men who, one would have thought,

[1] A. T. Bannister.

were schooled to good and noble and pure habits of prayer and thought, have somehow failed, have forgotten the real principles upon which their lives were founded. What was the secret?

It is not far to seek. What led these men into this sad plight; what drew them away from the right path? Flattery. There are men whom you can threaten, and they will not flinch; men to whom you can go and plead, and no pleading of yours will draw them away from what they feel to be the path of duty; but if only you will flatter them you may twist them round your little finger. The men of Gibeon came to the Israelites and told them that they were famed, that the fame of their doings and the fame of their history had reached to far away lands. And it was very pleasant, it was just what these Israelites wanted to hear. They had come up out of the depths of the Arabian desert; they had broken in upon a land of ancient civilization, of cities great and lofty; and it was pleasant to hear that they were known when they came there. The man who has suddenly sprung from the ranks and entered in among those who belong to the old institutions of the land likes to think that people know who he is, and that the old and venerable families around him do not need to look scornfully upon him and ask where he has come from. And so it was flattering to the self-love of those wanderers from the desert to feel that they were known and that their fame had spread.

2. Notice now the folly of a lie. 'And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.' It was not a long life for a lie. There are many lies that have lived longer than that. Like some poor, cheap vessel, it held water for only three days, and then it began to leak, and the whole thing was out. It is a poor business lying. You are never done with it, for one thing, unless it fails at the very outset; and the longer the lie lives the more terrible does it become.

How different truth is. You state it, and it is done, it needs no buttressing, it needs no more working at; you can go to sleep after it. You can't sleep when you have told a lie; you never know when that lie may come back to you and the mischief be out. You can sleep after you have told the truth; it needs nothing more, it is plain, simple, and does its work, no repairs, no building of it up again, no explanations, no endless devices, no new lies to be made; it is stated, and there it is. This is one of those things which make one feel that, after all, in this world, where there is so much that is mysterious, so much that we cannot understand, there is yet a great moral law; and no man can break out against that moral order and not suffer, no man can go astray from the path of truth and not find out how costly that is; no man can do that which is upright and true, and not feel that he is working indeed in line and in harmony with this great moral order.

¶ The Archbishop spoke little of his father, but always with great love and respect. One story is worth recording. The boy had made some inaccurate statement; and when corrected said, rather lightly, 'It will be all the same a hundred years hence.' He recalled the tremendous earnestness with which his father turned on him and said, 'That might be true of some things, but was never true of a lie; it poisoned the very air.' [1]

3. Turn now from the Gibeonites, with their terror, their fear of what might befall them, and look at the Israelites. One wonders whether the anger of the one was greater than the terror of the other. They had been deceived, they had been taken in, and they had made a covenant. But surely, they said, that covenant is not binding; it has been made on entirely false conceptions; it was obtained by misrepresentation; it cannot be required that we should keep it. The decree had gone forth that all those evil peoples dwelling in the land were to be exterminated, and surely if ever a nation deserved extermination these men did, these men who had added to all the crimes that belonged to their people the craft and the deception and the meanness of that lie.

And all the congregation murmured against

[1] *Memoirs of Archbishop Temple*, 21.

the princes. But Joshua stood up against them, and those men's lives were saved because of the promise made to them. Israel might have won a victory over Gibeon quickly enough; they were inferior, and Israel was a successful people; but in that hour Israel won a grander victory than ever she could have won over Gibeon, for she won a moral victory. There are times in the history of the Kingdom of God that might be taken out and specially marked, and this is one of them: this is one of those stages in the upward progress of the Kingdom deserving of being marked with red ink, so to speak. This moment when the nation of Israel realized that to be faithful to truth was far grander than to be victorious over one's foes, was one of the greatest victories of the spiritual and the moral over the merely material that one finds in this ancient story.

¶ Our business in life is not to get ahead of other people, but to get ahead of ourselves. To break our own record, to outstrip our yesterdays by to-days, to bear our trials more beautifully than we ever dreamed we could, to whip the tempter inside and out as we never whipped him before, to give as we never have given, to do our work with more force and a finer finish than ever,—this is the true idea,—to get ahead of ourselves. To beat some one else in a game, or to be beaten, may mean much or little. To beat our own game means a great deal. Whether we win or not, we are playing better than we ever did before, and that's the point after all—to play a better game of life.[1]

## The Standing Still of the Sun.

Josh. x. 12, 13.—'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon: And thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies.'

The most ancient portions of the narrative of the Old Testament are usually indicated by poetic fragments. In the Book of Joshua, that which is probably the oldest sentence in the whole compilation is our text. It is the only fragment of poetry in the whole story. For this text is just a couple of lines taken out of a book that is lost, the Book of Jasher, and is the work of a poet who sang his song before the other parts of the narrative were written. 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon'—does it not sound like poetry?—'and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.' Literature always begins in poetry, such as the Nibelungenlied, the Sagas of the Northmen or the song of Beowulf and the chant of Caedmon among our own Anglo-Saxon forefathers. Before ever pen was put to paper, men were singing the deeds of their heroes; and here is a poet singing part of the folklore of Israel, and we have just two lines of his song. He puts into the mouth of Joshua a prayer to the powers of heaven to aid him in the great fight. 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon: and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.' The poet never intended this to be thought of as other than a figure; and he would be greatly surprised if he heard of the discussions that have taken place over those two lines.

Shakespeare uses precisely the same figure. In *King John,* Act iii., Scene 1, he makes the King of France speak thus on the occasion of a royal marriage:—

> This blessed day
> Ever in France shall be kept festival:
> To solemnize this day the glorious sun
> Stays in his course and plays the alchemist,
> Turning with splendour of his precious eye
> The meagre cloddy earth to glittering gold:
> The yearly course that brings this day about
> Shall never see it but a holiday.

Shakespeare would be surprised indeed if he were to learn that in the twentieth century a book had been written to prove that he meant the King of France to say that the sun did stand still when a daughter of the royal house was wedded. But we need not suppose any such thing. We can get beneath the poet's figure and understand what was meant. Joshua had been sent for to recover a territory that had been lost to Israel. 'And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp of Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us.' And Joshua's reply is, 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon'—may the sun of Israel

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living.*

never go down; the victory of Israel shall never be turned into defeat, and Israel's God must reign over this new land for ever.

And now, beneath the figure, can we see anything more of Joshua's own experience without necessarily drawing too much upon the imagination? The ancient singer makes Joshua utter, first, an expression of the faithful determination of a brave man, his assertion of moral purpose; and, secondly, an appeal to Heaven to aid him in the realization of that purpose.

1. Here is the faithful determination of a brave man. To learn what it is, try to see the issues as Joshua saw them on the day of this great struggle. It is unquestionable that the tribes which were being driven out before Israel represented a lower standard of morality, also a lower idea of God, than that for which Joshua and his tribesmen stood; and, as so many times in history before and since, that which was baser had to give way to that which was higher. Do not let us read too much into this. The Chosen People did not know God as we know Him. To them He was a tribal god; but it is their chief glory that their tribal deity was worshipped in righteousness. This Joshua knew, and for this Joshua stood. That we may realize how strongly he felt concerning it, let us remember the stand he took in his last years, when his last battle had been fought, and he came to say his valedictory words to Israel: 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' Israel departed from the worship of Jehovah more than once in their history. On every such occasion they chose an easier but a baser faith. Their idolatry always meant a moral set-back, and, however little their worship of Jehovah may have meant to them in these formative days, it was a greater and a nobler thing than that which it drove out. Hence this was to Joshua, the great captain, a religious war. He was fighting for something more than a name; he was fighting for the future of a people; he was fighting for a great ethical ideal, and his whole heart and soul went into it. It was to him, as it were, a kind of crusade before crusades began. The long conflict resembled closely the struggle of Christianity with Muhammadanism on this very ground, or the conflict with the Moors in Spain centuries afterwards.

¶ Joshua seems to me to bear some resemblance to the first Christian king of Jerusalem, Godfrey of Bouillon. Do you remember, when Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Crusaders, and the terrible massacre of the infidels was over, and Godfrey of Bouillon was enthroned as the first king of the Holy City, what the old warrior said as he knelt at the tomb of his Saviour? He refused to wear a crown of gold in the city where his Saviour had worn a crown of thorns, and his first act after the victory was to vow himself again to the service of the Son of Man. Why, you would say, he had a very poor idea of the Saviourhood of Christ if he vindicated it by the shedding of torrents of blood. Maybe; but for the time being this man was doing as well as he knew how in the great commission that had been entrusted to him, and it was better for the world that the Cross conquered that day than the Crescent. So it was better for the world that the sword of Joshua cleared the land of Canaan of pollution, noisomeness, and fiendish cruelty; for, even though it meant the shedding of blood, this Old Testament hero was standing for something that was morally nobler than the things he displaced. This old-time crusader was fighting his crusade before there was a Cross to fight under. This Joshua of the Old Testament is of the same type as the Christian heroes of all ages. He was vowing himself in his prayer, 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon,' like Godfrey praying at the Saviour's tomb.[1]

2. And then his prayer is an appeal to heaven to win the victory, not only for him, but for all for which Israel stood. He is praying to his fathers' God in the spirit of the ancient song: 'Unto you that fear my name,' saith the Lord, 'shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.' Now probably we are getting nearer to the spirit of this ancient power than we were at first. We

[1] R. J. Campbell.

enter with something of the historic imagination into his circumstances. Now we agree that when he uttered his command, which was really a prayer, 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon,' he was praying, like an enthusiast, a hero, for constancy, for strength, and for victory for himself, for his people, and for their God. To-day we see much further than Joshua ever saw, not of our merits but, in however small a degree, of his. 'Others have laboured,' said our Lord, 'and ye are entered into their labours.' We fight in a cause nobler than that in which Joshua drew the sword, but we can do no better with our destiny than he did with his. For every task, no matter what, a certain moral exaltation is needed to lift it out of the sphere of the worldly and the commonplace. To pray with earnestness, with enthusiasm: 'Sun of Righteousness, Light of Jehovah, stand thou still upon Gibeon', to pray thus in the midst of warring circumstances, is to transform them from a conflict into a crusade.

¶ Dr. J. G. Paton, the veteran missionary to the New Hebrides, ventured into a wholly savage community undefended and alone, to carry with him the glad tidings of great joy. His mood appears to have been that of Joshua, the great captain, and, like him, he had his votive prayer. In the midst of his warfare it seemed for the time being as if a territory he had conquered for Christ was to be lost to him, just as Joshua lost his Gibeon; and he says:—

'In discouragement, almost in despair, one night, after long praying, I fell into a deep sleep in my cabin, and God granted me a heavenly dream, or vision which greatly comforted me, explain it how you will. Sweetest music, praising God, arrested me, and came nearer and nearer. I gazed towards it approaching, and seemed to behold hosts of shining beings bursting into view. The brilliancy came pouring all from one centre, and that was ablaze with insufferable brightness. Blinded with excess of light, my eyes seemed yet to behold in fair outline the form of the glorified Jesus, but as I lifted them to gaze on His face the joy deepened into pain; my hand rose instinctively to shade my eyes. I cried out with ecstasy. The music passed farther and farther away, and I started up, hearing a voice saying in marvellous power and sweetness, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." At this some will only smile, but to me it was a great and abiding consolation, and I kept repeating to myself, "He is Lord, and they are all ministering spirits. If He cheers me thus in His own work, I take courage, I know I shall succeed." '[1]

## Spiritual Equivalents.

Josh. x. 14.—'There was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man.'

EMERSON says of the commanding personality that the world does not wait for evidence of his power, but recognizes him at once and hastens to pay the homage due to greatness. Such a being conveys his consciousness of his own power to others; 'he conquers where he stands'; before ever his deeds have evinced his worth he overcomes opposition and wins allegiance and co-operation. And as it is in the external world, so also, we may conclude, it is in that inner world of spirit where prayer operates. In that realm, too, when the soul has reached the point at which it becomes victorious, it commands rather than pleads, becoming like Jacob, to whom it was said, 'As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed'; or like Elijah, who 'commanded' the fire to come down from heaven; or like Joshua, to whose personal power is attributed a day of which it is written, 'There was no day like that before it or after it, when the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man.' Deem these allegory or fact as we will, they tell the same tale of the conquering might of human personality having effect in heaven and on earth.

Joshua's personal power was manifested in prayer. He got what he asked because he asked it earnestly. For it is the law of life that we receive in proportion to the intensity and force of our demand, and along the same plane. If our desires are material, and formulate them-

[1] R. J. Campbell.

elves as such, they will be honoured, but in ne end we shall find the results unsatisfying; they are spiritual, but for personal good nly, the response will be of the same nature s the prayer, until we discover that it comes etween us and our own highest; but if the rayer be consistently from the standpoint of hat highest, it will mould us accordingly and ring to us an ever increasing meed of power nd joy. Life is like playing an organ; you et whatever note you press strongly enough, nd there are no silent stops.

1. Have you ever known a man whose houghts were so entirely concentrated upon noney-making that he could hardly think of nything else? Have you observed how his houghts have moulded him as he has grown lder? If you knew him as a lad you probably new that there were other latent possibilities n him yhich have never come to fruition; hav- ng chosen his pathway, he has become more nd more like his pursuits until they have ecome stamped on the very expression of his ace. You have sometimes been astonished at he extraordinary way in which circumstances eem to fit that man's convenience; he has a ort of instinct for knowing how to turn things o the best advantage so far as his own pocket s concerned; you have heard others say with hagrin that he has the devil's luck. It is uite true; so he has. His success belongs to hat order. But has it ever occurred to you hat that man is getting the answer to his rayers? That is just what he is doing, and, n spite of his wealth, he is miserably poor. The note he has been sounding on God's organ vith all the pressure of his personality is gain, gain, gain, and the answer is just what he leserves, though he may not find it out till he oes naked to the judgment-seat of Christ. It s possible, of course, that he may have all the lesire for material gain without the success. This does not invalidate the general principle. Whether he succeeds or fails, he is the kind f man his prayers have made. 'He gave them heir request; but sent leanness into their oul.'

¶ There was yet a deeper lesson in another trange picture by Mr. Burne-Jones, called 'The Depths of the Sea.' A mermaid, beautiful in face, but hideously repellent in her scaly train, has flung her arms around a youth, and is dragging him down through the green waters to her cave. In her face is the intense malignity of cruel triumph and cruel scorn; in the youth's face is the agony of frustration and of death. And the motto below is: '*Habes tota quod mente petisti, Infelix!*'—Thou hast what thou soughtest with all thy soul, unhappy one.[1]

2. A little higher in the scale are the prayers which express themselves as ambition, desire for fame, power over one's fellows, and the like. Napoleon cared little about money for its own sake, but he was a monomaniac for personal aggrandisement. What he did on a colossal scale and with all the impetus of a mighty genius, most of us are doing on a minor scale with limited ability and opportunities. But, as God sees, the results are not so very different. Viewed from far enough above, a hawk is indistinguishable from an eagle. Are you continually sacrificing someone else for the sake of the good opinion of your little world? Are you doing mean and petty things, compromising with your conscience, in order to secure some little personal advancement which may lead to greater consideration with those whose smiles are not worth having? Then you are an egotist, whether you have the power of a Cæsar or only that of a chattel slave. If one were minded to be cynical, it would be easily possible to hold up our selfish foibles to bitter ridicule; indeed, we have a way of doing that behind one another's backs, but it is too pitiful for cynicism. For what poor, empty ideals many of us live habitually! How little we see ourselves as we really are! And, most dreadful thought of all, what a wretched use many of us are making of God's great gift of prayer! For this is praying—although it seldom receives the name. By the great law of spiritual equivalents we are receiving just what we demand, and the amount of it is in direct proportion to our faith, or confidence, in the outcome of the prayer.

¶ I have been amazed and even stupefied

[1] *The Life of F. W. Farrar*, 341.

sometimes to consider how my own little petty, foolish, whimsical desires have been faithfully and literally granted me. We most of us do really translate into fact what we desire, and as a rule we only fail to get the things which we have not desired enough. It is true indeed that we often find that what we desired was not worth getting; and we ought to be more afraid of our desires, not because we shall not get them, but because we shall almost certainly have them fulfilled. For myself I can only think with shame how closely my present conditions do resemble my young desires, in all their petty range, their trivial particularity. I suppose I have unconsciously pursued them, chosen them, grasped at them; and the shame of it is that if I had desired better things, I should assuredly have been given them. I see, or seem to see, the same thing in the lives of many that I know. What a man sows he shall reap! That is taken generally to mean that if he sows pleasure, he shall reap disaster; but it has a much truer and more terrible meaning than that—namely, that if a man sows the seed of small, trivial, foolish joys, the grain that he reaps is small, trivial, and foolish too. God is indeed in many ways an indulgent Father, like the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son; and the best rebuke that He gives, if we have the wisdom to see it, is that He so often does hand us, with a smile, the very thing we have desired. And thus it is well to pray that He should put into our minds good desires, and that we should use our wills to keep ourselves from dwelling too much upon small and pitiful desires, for the fear is that they will be abundantly gratified.[1]

3. But let us quit these lower levels and come to the higher ranges of spiritual activity. What about the prayer that is the concentrated desire for purity of heart, greatness of soul, love for God and man? What about the appeal for comfort in time of sorrow, or the cry for deliverance in an hour of temptation? 'Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?' Some people will tell you that it is a perilous thing to expect answers to prayer, because God cannot change His plans to meet our needs. But there is no necessity for God to change His plans. All we can ever need or desire is already present in His loving purpose for our good and only waits to be claimed; but it must be claimed, for that is the necessary condition by which alone the soul can grow; it is no use complaining of hunger if you do not eat when food is before you. There is no breach of the Divine order in the answer given to the prayer of simple faith, and the more definite and purposeful we can be in our petitions the better. Spiritual life is like the gradual ascent of a majestic mountain from whose sides an ever larger and fuller view of the surrounding landscape is obtained, and prayer is our means of locomotion. If it be feeble and spasmodic we make little or no headway; if it be constant and determined it lifts us daily nearer to our eternal goal and enables us to understand better and more clearly the beauty and glory of our heritage in God.

You see how it is: you draw to yourself by your prayers the influences most closely akin to your desires. The higher the aspiration the greater the uplift of the soul. God does indeed hearken to the voice of a man; we are, in a sense, creators of our own destiny by the thoughts we think and the deeds we do. We are all different, so different that no man's life can be a rule for another's, but our goal is the same. 'For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.'

There are some that pray by asking;
  They lie on the Master's breast,
And, shunning the strife of the lower life,
  They utter their cry for rest.

There are some that pray by seeking;
  They doubt where their reason fails,
But their mind's despair is the ancient prayer
  To touch the print of the nails.

There are some that pray by knocking;
  They put their strength to the wheel,
For they have not time for thought sublime—
  They can only act what they feel.

Father give each his answer—
  Each in his kindred way;
Adapt Thy light to his form of night,
  And grant him his needed day.

[1] A. C. Benson, *Joyous Gard*, 90.

## Put it on one Side.

Josh. x. 16-19.—'And these five kings fled, and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hid in the cave at Makkedah. And Joshua said, Roll great stones unto the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them: but stay not ye; pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them; suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the Lord your God hath delivered them into your hand' (RV).

Why did Joshua not settle the problem of the captured kings right away? Why did he leave it over until the end of the day? Well, doubtless there were certain formalities to be gone through even in the execution of enemy rulers. The very carrying out of the penalty would have taken time, and would have distracted the thoughts, and perhaps sapped the energies, of the victorious Israelites, when they had still much to do. Bundle them into the cave and leave them there, said Joshua; and get on with the more important work that you have in hand. 'Roll great stones unto the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them: but stay not ye.'

Some people swerve from their life's great purpose through the problem of the kings in the cave. Things are going well enough, when they are suddenly stayed in their pursuit through the discovery of five sinister figures crouching in the dark recesses of an unexplored cave. They are arrested by the discovery, and perhaps rather intrigued by it. For example, there are certain difficulties in the dealings of Providence in our own life and experience, or in the life and experience of others. We all come up against these difficulties sooner or later. Or it may be that the kings that give us pause are passages in the Bible that we can't explain, and that we don't want anybody to explain away for us. For all of us there are unfinished bits of our life, awkward questions, inexplicable happenings. Now to some people these things prove a kind of *pons asinorum* almost at the outset of their encounter with the many problems of life; and failing to find their way across this bridge, they never come to grips with the far greater and more interesting questions. And Joshua's advice is a real lesson on how to handle these initial problems of life and destiny. Don't waste time parleying with the five kings. Leave them and attend to more pressing work. Gather your own five wits together and get on with the bigger business. There will be plenty of time in the end of the day, when you have rounded up more urgent affairs and carried judgment to victory, to come back and deal with the problem of the kings in the cave. First win the war, and then set about fixing the responsibility for the causing of it. Some people won't do anything till certain prayers are answered. God says, 'We'll come back on that; follow on just now and do other work.'

¶ Someone asked the founder of the Salvation Army what he made of the difficulties of the Bible. And the old man made a very characteristic and homely reply, a reply which contains a whole world of philosophy for the proper treatment of the cave kings of life and experience. General Booth did not deny, as some would-be devout and foolish people do try to deny, that there are any difficulties in the Bible. 'I do in my reading of the Bible,' he said, 'what I do when I am eating a bloater. When I come across a bone, I just put it on one side of my plate, and go on till I find the next nourishing mouthful.' The kings in the cave didn't give him five minutes' thought, any more than they gave Joshua. He had far more pressing work in hand: the Lord's battle to win and a fleeing foe to chase. There would be time enough in the end of the great day to return and fix up Jonah's whale and the imprecatory psalms.

This was the advice which was given by the greater Joshua. There was a moment when the disciples were in danger of having their attention deflected from the path of service by idle speculation over a philosophic problem of heredity and suffering. 'Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?' And Jesus just said to them, 'We won't worry over that; but we'll go and see what we can do for the blind man.'

And again, there came a time when Peter was desperately anxious to know what was going to happen to a friend of his in afterlife. And once again Jesus said in effect,

'Peter, old man, don't worry your head about that. Just you follow Me.' There were far too many things to be done in life to spend time over the kings in the dark cave. And the men who have followed most closely in the Master's footsteps are not those to whom everything has been made plain. They would readily acknowledge and confess that at the best they see through a glass darkly most of the great issues of life. But it is enough for them to know that one day they shall know even as also they are known. Meanwhile they have but one care, and that is to work the works of Him that sent them while it is day, that at the great roll-call they may not be found empty-handed. You know that such a one has his spiritual skeletons hidden away in some cupboard, his five sinister figures walled up in some cave. But he is coming nearer gaining the final victory every hour he lives. Like Faber's 'Country Labourer,'

Always his downcast eye
Was laughing silently,
As if he found some jubilee in thinking;
For his one thought was God,
In that one thought he abode
For ever in that thought more deeply sinking.

One of the greatest secrets of ultimate success in life is knowing how to treat the problem of the kings in the cave. There is no branch of knowledge, there is no pursuit on which we can engage, in which we will not soon come up against aspects which present for the time being insoluble difficulties.

This is the secret of ultimate victory in life, that a man should just frankly acknowledge to himself that there are certain questions which he must be content to leave on one side for the present. To shelve a thing does not necessarily mean to shirk it. There are some things which you can never understand until you have earned the right to understand them by returning victorious from the fight. Whatever you do, see that doubt does not settle down into denial. Do not allow the enemy to entrench himself in any of the fenced cities from which it will be too late to try and dislodge him. Just leave the things that are too high for you where they stand, and press on to do some bit of service for God and man. Do anything but dally. 'Roll great stones unto the mouth of the cave; but stay not ye.' The secret of the Lord is with those that pursue the enemy, not with those that never get beyond the idols of the cave. There is an injunction given twice over in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, which contains the root of the matter for all honest minds and faithful souls. 'Then shall we know,' says one of the prophets, 'if we follow on to know.' And Jesus countersigned that promise for us. 'He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine.' [1]

I have a life with Christ to live,
But, ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this and that book's date?
I have a life in Christ to live,
I have a death in Christ to die;—
And must I wait, till science give
All doubts a full reply?

Nay rather, while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life and death and sin,
Let me but creep within
Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
Take but the lowest seat,
And hear Thine awful voice repeat
In gentlest accents, heavenly sweet,
Come unto Me, and rest,
Believe Me, and be blest.[2]

## Omission.

Josh. xi. 15.—'He left nothing undone.'

'THIS year *omissions* have distressed me more than anything.' So speaks Andrew A. Bonar, concluding one of the years of his life. How many of us at this moment are similarly distressed! We have done things that we ought not to have done; we have left undone the things that we ought to have done.

1. The things undone are *many*. We have

[1] H. L. Simpson, *The Intention of His Soul*, 183ff.
[2] J. C. Shairp.

not left undone a duty here and there merely, we have the painful consciousness of having missed so much that more seems undone than done. We sometimes boast of what we get into a day, or into a year; but if all that we have left undone could suddenly stand revealed, how surprised and overwhelmed we should be! How much more we might have done, how much more achieved, had we thrown ourselves into life with a quiet enthusiasm! Darwin's biographer relates that the great scientist 'never wasted a few spare minutes from thinking that it was not worth while to set to work.' His golden rule was 'taking care of the minutes.' And so he became rich and accurate in knowledge, writing his wonderful books, instructing his own and future generations. If we had carried out this diligence in our daily life as Darwin carried it out in his intellectual life, how much richer our character would have been, how much more tranquil our conscience, how much larger our service to our generation!

With what fiery energy the bird, the bee, or the butterfly, carries out the special commission with which it is entrusted! Throughout earth and sky the various creatures fulfil their vocation unrestingly, leaving nothing undone of all that the Lord has commanded them. In Nature everything seems to be done that can be done with the granted measure of time, space, material, and energy. But we are conscious of a very different, and far less satisfactory, state of things in the human sphere. Here inertia, laziness, slipperiness, procrastination prevail. There are great gaps in our work; the time-sheet of life leaves days and weeks unaccounted for; large areas of our inheritance are unsown, unreaped; all kinds of beginnings abide sorrowfully incomplete. It is a strange world, the world of the undone—the world that God has thought and man has not made—blank, unshapely, chaotic. We cannot comprehend all that it means; we cannot imagine how the government of God will deal with it. And yet the realm of the unrealized, so strange and ominous, seems at least quite as big as the world that has been actualized by human energy and faithfulness.

2. The things undone are often *the things of greatest consequence.* Emerson speaks of 'the science of omitting.' A very necessary and much neglected science. 'The artist,' says Schiller, 'may be known rather by what he omits.' The master of literary style is best recognized by his tact of omission. The orator declares his genius as much by what he leaves out as by what he puts into his discourses. And in life the science of omission must have a large place. In the vast, jostling, competing crowd of beings and things, of positions and principles, of interests and careers, of pains and pleasures, there must be stern selection, a science of omission. Life on its moral side, in its highest sense, becomes complete and successful by exclusion: if we are to make anything out of it, we must reject much. He who knows best what to exclude will make the best of the chequered scene.

When, however, an artist understands the science of omission, he leaves out the trivial, the vulgar, the irrelevant. Pater speaks of Watteau, the French artist, as 'sketching the scene to the life, but with a kind of grace, a marvellous tact of omission in dealing with the vulgar reality seen from one's own window.' Yes, leaving out the vulgar features and commonplace detail. The literary master also selects the large, the beautiful, the essential. The orator seizes the salient aspects of his theme, the true, the pathetic, the grand, scrupulously avoiding whatever is prosaic and superfluous. But the defect in our moral life is, that in our science of omission we too often leave out the primary, the highest, the essential. The trivial, the fugitive, the inferior, the accidental, are given a place in our life; whilst the large, the noble, the precious, and the supreme are excluded. We prove ourselves miserable artists in the highest art of all by adopting so freely the vulgar and trifling, and crowding out the Divine elements and opportunities which solicit us.

(1) It is thus with us in questions of *character.* 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not

to leave the other undone.' We place an exaggerated importance on some minor matter of conscience and conduct, all the time neglecting great qualities and obligations. The weightier matters are more difficult and we evade them.

(2) It is thus with matters of *duty*. We shirk the calls demanding courage, diligence, and sacrifice, contenting ourselves with doing abundantly the things which are more immediately connected with our pride, our interest, or our pleasure. Invited to make our duty our delight, we are ingeniously intent upon making our delight our duty. We evade the severer calls because they are inconvenient, disagreeable, irksome. The minor things ought to be done; nothing is to be left out: but if anything is left out, it ought not to be the weightier matters. Here we are often condemned. Great principles are left out of our character, because they are difficult to acquire and maintain; great duties are ignored, because they mean heroism and suffering; great opportunities are forfeited, because they demand promptitude and resolution; great works are declined, because they involve consecration and sacrifice.

¶ Everything worth while in the intellectual or moral life must be bought and paid for by giving up irreconcilable habits and indulgences. To be a good physician, a good lawyer, a good musician, or a good Christian means self-denial. But there are too many folk who never get beyond that emphasis. Their goodness is always a burden to them. They are halfway good, wishing to indulge in evil, but not daring to, clinging to right living with reluctant resolution, looking upon duty as an elephant might on his rider, sitting on his neck and pulling at his ears with an iron prong to make him go whither he would not.[1]

3. The things undone are *things for which we must be held responsible*. We are often deeply concerned, as indeed we ought to be, with the things we have done amiss; but we are less troubled by the things left undone. Yet the negative side is as really sin as is the positive side. What is the deep meaning of the parable of the Talents? 'And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant.' No charge of misapplication of talents, of employing them in illegitimate speculations, of subsidising evil systems or movements; it was simply a question of doing nothing. In these modern days it is rather fashionable for men of a certain type to stand quite aside from an active career. They are deeply impressed by the seriousness of life, by its difficulties, its mysteries; they are keenly alive to its dangers and oppositions, and they do their best to keep clear of the embarrassments of public active life; they decline, as far as may be, its relationships, its obligations, its trials, its honours, its sorrows. They will tell you that they have no gifts, no calling, no opportunity. But, however disguised, these lives are slothful and guilty. Such men may do little amiss; their guilt is found in what they have left undone, unattempted—the undone being worse than the badly done, the unattempted being worse than failure.

Most of us have somewhat of this slothful temper. We are chargeable with neglect in many particulars. True, we gloss with mild names this shirking of duty. We call it expediency, standing over, modesty, deliberation, forgetfulness, oversight; but it ought to be called sloth, hypocrisy, cowardice, sin. How great is our guilt on this side of life! How much undone for God, for man, for our own perfecting! Well may we pray, in the last words of Archbishop Ussher, 'Lord, forgive my sins, especially my sins of omission'; or, in the appeal of the Litany: 'That it may please Thee to give us true repentance; to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances!' 'Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults.'

¶ I had been to a strange church to preach. At the conclusion of the service I saw about a hundred and twenty boys who belonged to the Boys' Brigade line up outside the church. They all seemed in fine trim and in good order. Then there came the captain, but in appearance he was no beauty; his physique

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 75.

was poor in the extreme, his legs were crooked, and there were other irregularities I need not mention. Nevertheless, he knew how to give the orders and how to secure prompt obedience. I listened to his instructions, and was filled with admiration as I thought of the obstacles and difficulties he had to overcome in order to secure the great end he had in view. At that moment a man in the most approved garments —trousers of faultless crease, gloves without stain—came to me and said, 'Does it not look absurd that a deformed man should be placed over a number of boys for such a purpose?' He assured me how heartily he believed in the work, and said the efforts on behalf of the boys were most praiseworthy, but it was outrageous that such a crooked man should be placed in so prominent a position. Then it was I asked if he had ever volunteered for the post. He said, 'No.' I asked if he had ever done anything for any boy he was anxious should develop well. He said he could not say that he had. Then I said, 'My dear man, for God's sake, keep silent, unless, indeed, you want to confess your own shabbiness for blaming a man of physical drawbacks for heroically attempting a work you have been too lazy to touch.'[1]

[1] G. G. Muir, *The Throne without the Czar*, 184.

# UNPOSSESSED POSSESSIONS.

Josh. xiii. 1.—'Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the Lord said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.'

So it is always with these little lives of ours, where the dusk falls so soon, and all the hopes, longings, endeavours, have to be put by, for already the long night has come. Moses in his day set his face to a splendid, an audacious, an impossible adventure: to awaken a passion for liberty, that would dare everything for it, in born slaves, abject, cowed, broken, with no stars or hope of any dawn; to weld that soft crumbling stuff into a nation with some sense of corporate life and unity; to wrest a home for these poor caitiffs out of the strong hands of sturdy virile peoples. It was a daft dream,—nothing more. And yet patiently, persistently, whole-heartedly, he gave his life to it, leading, coaxing, thundering, rousing tired hearts, rekindling hopes that had gone out, till at long last it all—all but came true. The hour had struck, the years of weary waiting had crawled past; there lay the land full in sight at last, another step or two and it was reached. And he had to fall out, with his dream still only a dream, robbed of achievement by so very little. And now in his turn Joshua, that man of energy and push, who had great enterprises to his credit, and a long roll of fame to show, felt just the same, looked back at all that he had meant to do—and could have done, so his heart told him now—and round about him at the actuality of things, wistful, ashamed, touched by the pathos of this life of ours, because so little had come of it after all. That is the common fate. 'The curse,' says Paracelsus, is that

We get so near—so very, very near!
'Tis an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans down,
Not when they set about their mountain-piling
But when another rock would crown the work.

But, near or far, most folk of any vision, any bigness, any hunger of soul die still hungering; gazing, as Mr. Masefield has it, at 'spires away on the world's rim,' at peaks fired by the dawning of a day they will not see; at a fair land, to which they have travelled far, but which they will not enter. 'Babels men block out, Babylons they build.' And Babylon is a great city, wide, spacious, wonderful, and so is life. But Babylon is not the empire of our dreams.

Youth does not credit that! And that is well. For youth ought to be sanguine, even over sanguine. Its function is to be a perpetual ferment, to keep the world from settling on the lees, from dozing over, from losing expectancy, from growing dull and stupidly content. And therefore every generation starts off with a generous impatience with things as

it finds them, hotly contemptuous of the muddling of its predecessors, sure that in its day it will bring in that new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell. And there is plenty of time. For, at the start, life shoots out before us, illimitably far; and death is a mere idle rumour that has nothing to do with us, like the news of a disaster on a Chinese river, out of our world. But things are dour, and human nature is thrawn and incorrigible, and evil has far deeper roots than one sees from the surface. And in the end a statesman's whole tumultuous life, all its noise, excitement, pother, is summed up in two or three lines of mild reform that leaves things in essence quite unchanged. And all the passion and enthusiasm of a generation make such a little dent on what has to come down. And we ourselves look toward Jesus Christ, and try and pray and labour and endeavour to grow like Him, and yet our small stock of years slip past without very much to show for them, leaving us, as we feel in some moods, much as if we had not hoped or tried or prayed at all. Life ends with a mass of things unfinished, with hopes still hopes, and dreams unrealized.

Kelvin declares that what he saw written across his life was the word 'failure.' Others were amazed at his discoveries; he, looking at what he had hoped to do, had meant to learn, felt keenly he had failed. There was so very much land still left unpossessed, that all that he had won seemed to his disappointed eyes only a cramped and stuffy little corner not worth calling an estate. Rhodes, with his name blazed across Africa, died in the same mood: Chalmers declared that in the end of the day we have all to go back to our Father, and humbly put into His hands the plans that we have not worked out: all big souls, indeed, are apt to pass on Pisgah, or gazing like Joshua at the far valleys and the rolling hills of the wide lands still unpossessed. Till at times one feels that life has not been wisely planned, has been built up on too small and niggardly a scale to give us any chance. Mr. George Bernard Shaw argues boldly in one of his plays that little can be done in the way of progress till the average human life is lengthened to three hundred years. Then things might really happen. But now there is such waste! A scholar slowly amasses unique knowledge, and, before he can use it, dies; and his son has to begin, not where the father fell, but away back at the alphabet. God hammers us into an instrument that He might use, and then He has to drop us, for our time has come. We learn to live, and get no chance of putting what we have learned into action. As Horace Walpole wrote to Hannah More, 'Experience seems to me to reverse its value, by coming at the wrong end of life, when we can't use it.'

So much so that we fall back upon our dreams and hopes and longings, producing these rather than the drab facts as our letters patent of nobility. There is not much to show: but we did see and yearn and try. So Browning constantly: 'The aim, or reached or not, makes great the life.' 'Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, Or what's a heaven for?' 'Tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!' 'All I could never be, All, men ignored in me, This, I was worth to God.' And there is a blessed truth in that. And yet, and yet! 'I am half sick of shadows,' said the Lady of Shalott, 'want substance, and reality and fact.'

This at least is clear—that we have no time to lose, must use our life with thoroughness, must live it out with zeal, if we are to do anything with it at all. 'Remember,' says Plato, 'you did not come into the world by accident, but at the very moment God had need of you,' and that moment slips away so quickly. At the best, we shall in the end look out upon much unaccomplished, much left unpossessed. But if we dawdle, will not one of God's dreams, that He has dreamed from all eternity, go out, become impossible for ever more?

Few things, surely, are more pathetic than the unnecessary loss we keep bringing upon ourselves through our failure to use our possessions. There they are, really ours, and yet we allow them to lie and rust, lead a far more pinched and tame existence than God planned for us. Sometimes it is through sheer indolence. Folk can't be bothered, can't rouse themselves to face the dust and heat and strain-

ing effort needed for a real success; the cost seems to them too long, and so they let things be. But often it is through sheer diffidence and shyness. For there are many men, and perhaps more women, who form much too low an estimate of their own powers, assume that the big interests in life are not for them, who, obviously, are built on small lines and suited only for small things; think of themselves more meanly than the facts warrant, and through undue humility rob the world of what they have to give it. Our Lord tells us that He often came upon that mood; on people, not perhaps greatly gifted, but whose life might have been quite serviceable, who wasted it because, they argued, anything that they could do, or anything that they might spare, what difference could it make? And so they hid away their talents in a napkin and didn't possess or use their own possessions. Our Lord seems to have found that in every sphere; but most commonly in religion. Again and again He is taken aback and quite distressed by discovering that so many people are not making anything like what they might of themselves, and this because they cannot credit it as possible for them. They look with open admiration and some envy at the cleaner natures and more Christlike characters about them. But they make no real effort to imitate them. Because between all that and themselves they assume there is a great gulf fixed, and for them it is as far out of reach as are the witcheries of Chopin to a dabbler in music. No doubt, as the years slipped past, Joshua often enough looked wistfully from some height at the land still unpossessed that his heart claimed lying fair and fertile there around him. But what could he do? And how was he to wrest it from the strong hands that gripped it fast. And so he dreamed his dreams, knowing that they were futile, and it remained still theirs. And it is so we argue. Everywhere, we tell ourselves, there are some who have genius, and some who are mediocrities, and some who are mere bunglers. And in this spiritual sphere we are among the bunglers. We are not hurt much by our commonplaceness: we accept it with a kind of pious resignation. So it was fixed, we say, when we were fashioned at the first, and so it has to be.

Our Lord is not impressed by such thoughts. To Him that is not humility but mean-spiritedness, not a resolute facing of hard ugly facts, but just untrue. For the whole point of His message is that here is a sphere where no one is cut off from signal service; and He regards our Christian life, which we ourselves consider no very great affair but not quite discreditable, as an almost utter failure, can't understand why we won't take what we are meant to have, or use the possessions that we know are ours.

Prayer, for example, is for some of us no problem. We have no doubts about it such as appear to plague others. For we have tried it, and we know it works, is real, does things. But at that Christ interrupts us, 'Prayer! But you have never prayed, not to be called prayer! Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name. Why don't you use what you know you have?'

Some of us had a hard fight to cut our way through to faith. But we did it. And we have been justified. 'Faith,' says Christ with a smile, 'faith! Are you talking of having faith! If you had as much as a grain of mustard seed of it you would tumble about the hills, and lay flat the difficulties before which you lie and whine. If! But you haven't.'

Some of us are amazed at what Christ has done for us. And He looks at us wonderingly. 'Verily, verily you shall see greater things than these,' He says; is distressed that we are so easily satisfied, pitch just across the border of the Kingdom, don't go farther and take the whole fullness of the land that is our own. 'You are old,' said God to Joshua, 'your life is nearly over, and yet how very much more you might have done with it.' 'Ramoth in Gilead is ours,' cried Ahab, 'and yet, fools that we are, we sit still and take it not.' And the amazing promises of the gospel are not just glittering words that we read longingly and then must rise and, leaving that behind us, go back to our usual drab, prosaic, undistinguished spiritual life. These things are facts, and can be facts for you! 'And the

wonderful thing,' said Rainy as he lay dying and they read him some of the Pauline passages, all a sheen of splendour, all a shimmer of pure gold, 'and the wonderful thing is that it is all quite, quite true.'

And yet, look at a few of the rich provinces in the fair land that God has given us which we leave lying largely unpossessed.

To begin with, in the forefront of the gospel there are the offer and the fact of the forgiveness of sins. And it was that offer and that fact that gave the gospel its power. At first people were hardly able to take it in or credit what seemed too good to be true; went about dazed at the immensity of their own good fortune; felt like an outlaw who, knowing that the universe is hostile to him, that everywhere vast powers are out upon his track, with untiring feet that keep following tirelessly, and keen eyes peering everywhere, and that, hide where he may, sometime they will find and pull him down—who, knowing all this, receives a free pardon, and is done with that uneasy existence, can lead a real life at last. 'Dear me, Dr. Duncan, you've great news to-day,' they said to the old Hebrew Professor, for he was striding along Princes Street in Edinburgh, his face aglow, smiling to himself and cracking his fingers from sheer gladness of heart. 'News,' he made answer, 'Aye, the best news. The Blood of Jesus Christ still cleanseth from all sin, it has cleansed mine to-day.' But we are very cool about it, are we not? Think too much fuss is being made about our sins—if we must use that ugly word, which is, we think, unnecessarily crude and brutal. No doubt at all they are unfortunate slips. But God is kindly and will pull us through. So we are very easy-minded over it. Whitman tells us that sometimes he feels that he would like to go and live with the cattle. They are so placid and content. Not one of them, he notices approvingly, lies awake at night and weeps for its sins. If that be the ideal, certainly we are doing well; for as a generation we have reached an acme of bovine placidity. But really it is, of course, a sign of smallness, not of strength. It was when Father Damien happened to let boiling water spill upon his foot and felt no pain that he realized with horror that he was a leper. And this insensibility of ours is a bad symptom. For one thing, it implies that we have no spiritual ambition, else we couldn't be satisfied with such poor lives; can't have thought out the fact of Jesus Christ and how immeasurably He has raised the standard! Will you hang your wretched daubs beside the works of Titian and Michael Angelo and not be shamed by the enormous contrast? And can you live face to face with Jesus Christ and be content?

And indeed there are times when the facts come home to us almost stunningly, when to believe in the forgiveness of sins seems nearly impossible. God is so holy, and we are so sinful and soiled and impudent! The end must be a flush of anger that will wither us into annihilation. Yet it isn't, says the gospel. It's the Cross of Christ. It's that God pities you, forgives you, loves you; it's that His heart is with you after, through, in spite of, all; that He has done, is doing, everything He can to help you; that He thinks of you as you of your sick bairn whom you must save. What it may cost you never occurs to you. What does that matter? So at the Cross, where we see God face to face with no clouds and darkness hiding Him, look what sorrow we have caused Him! And yet see how widespread are His arms to gather everybody in! 'The forgiveness of sins! Of course,' you interrupt, peevish and querulous, 'all that is the mere rudiments of the most elementary faith.' And yet do you really believe it, have you taken possession of it, do you use it, and walk in the sunshine of it? Or is your faith only a trembling hope that flickers up and then dies out again—a mere perhaps, not the ringing assurance of the New Testament? It's true whether we believe it, or do not. That is a grimly dramatic story of the awful night in Egypt when the first-born were doomed. They had been told, the Israelites, to put blood on their lintels. And they did it. But when the dread hour really came, and that cry rose over the stricken land, came nearer and yet nearer, till it was at their very doors, some of them who believed stood, awed and moved, but with no personal

fear, only an immense gratitude to God. But others doubted. Oh, they had put blood upon the lintels, but of course nothing could come of that! They too would be bereft; their dear ones also would be taken. And white-faced, miserable, desperate, they waited as the terror came nearer and nearer and still nearer till—it passed. Whether we believe it or not, it is true. But why not enter upon what we are meant to possess? Ramoth in Gilead is ours. Why not live on these sunny heights, and leave the crawling fogs of these low and unhealthy valleys? Why not have the joy and peace of believing?

Again, the gospel is an assurance of the love of God, a confident declaration that there is no one of us but is surrounded by a particular, individual, unforgetting care, that we can count on that as certainly as if we had God all to ourselves, and He had never another thought—just you, just me.

'Of course!' you break in, 'Why keep harping on the very rudiments that every child knows?' But, frankly, do you believe it? If you do, there is an end of fear. And yet aren't our hearts very fearful? We think we trust Him; but, the smallest cloud, and all our faith is gone, and we have grown suspicious of Him. After all, is He Love? This doesn't look like it, has more resemblance to the action of a selfish churl who won't give what would cost him nothing and mean everything to us, or of an unjust judge who flagrantly denies us our bare dues!

If we believe it, we are done with care and worry! Yet there are lines upon our faces, brooding anxieties keep gathering and whispering in the dark corners of our frightened hearts. Why do we not go forward and seize our possessions? Ramoth in Gilead is ours; then why not take it? If this faith really is our faith, why not believe in it? What courage it would give us, what strength, what happiness! Stevenson once stood looking down on a dead man, and wished with all his heart he too was safely through it. Why? Because he was afraid of life. But he who really believes is not afraid. I know, says James in his Epistle, that many temptations are hurrying to assault us. Well, let them come! We shall win glory from it. That is the sure end.

Pascal confesses that the silence of the infinite spaces frightened him. But the whole-hearted believer is not frightened.

> I know not what the future hath
> Of marvel or surprise,
> Assured alone that life and death
> His mercy underlies.
>
> I know not where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond His love and care.

Look at the Lord Jesus Christ, with what gallantry of spirit He faced His heart-breaking life! And all because He didn't only say that He believed in God, He did it, actually did it, always did it, did not allow even the Cross to break His utter faith. Do we? The test will soon come. In the sunshine, while God's will is our will, it is easy. But when some hope crashes, or some dream goes out, or our circle breaks at last, what then? Ramoth in Gilead is ours. Well, let us take it.

Or, yet again, the whole point of the gospel is the coming of a strange new power which makes all spiritual triumphs possible—as steam or electricity have revolutionized the physical sphere. And this tremendous thing is a reality, a fact. For we have seen it in operation, have ourselves in some degree made proof of it. And yet, lay our actual experience of Christ beside His promises, what have we got out of the faith beside what the saints gained from it? and how drab and colourless the former seems! We are not making the most of it. Somewhere there is a break between our needs and this huge power which we allow to roar itself away resultlessly. If we used our possessions, if we took what is our own, there should be, could be, would be, vastly more to show. When Christ passed through the land He healed all that had need of healing. That is the picture of what He can do still.

And yet look at this so-called Christian land. Think of walking through the streets with Jesus Christ, of watching Him read the newspaper posters flaming with the result of some

horse race, or some prize fight, as if these were the most momentous happenings in this vast world, of seeing Him follow some poor creature reeling to his wretched home, and of His eyes as He turned to us and said, And you allow this kind of thing to go on year by year! And, abashed and humiliated, we would answer desperately, 'But what can we do? Of course we don't like it, but the thing seems ineradicable, and we are utterly helpless.' We! with a power that has pulled down much that was rooted deep as hell! If we would only take and use what we have in our hands, what would we not see in our days! 'Impossible,' they said to Danton, brushing aside one of his plans. 'Impossible,' cried he, 'never mention to me that blockhead of a word.' And the thing got done. And if we would adopt his motto, and would only dare, and still dare, and without end dare, if we would really use the power of Christ, really believe in it, really put it to the test, what would there not result?

Or take ourselves, Christ or no Christ, so unimpressive and so spiritually undistinguished! All the old landmarks are still there, the temper characteristic of us twenty years ago is still a characteristic. All God's dreams and sacrifices for us appear to have done so little in the actual result; even Calvary has so far produced only this in you and me. Why don't we use our faith? Ramoth in Gilead is ours. Up then and let us take it. Here is a power which instances innumerable and beyond all questioning prove could do anything for us, if we would only use it. If, if, if! Ah, but the difficulty is that when the pinch comes we don't want what it could give, and won't bestir ourselves, are sottishly content. Spenser tells us that when they liberated the poor slaves that Circe had transformed from human stateliness into mere beasts, some of them were ah! how grateful, but some were annoyed, missed their old sensual nature, and would not be satisfied without it. 'Let Gryll be Gryll, and have his hoggish mind,' they said in the end. And the poor fool, made swine again, ran grunting and squealing greedily to the pleasures of the mud and trough he had so sorely missed, content at last. And that is the real sorry reason why far more does not result in us. We could be more than conquerors, could do all things through Him that strengtheneth us; all things are possible to him who believes, to him who believes enough to take and use and try what we know we possess.

And yet in essence this is not a sombre and melancholy passage. This sense of unpossessed possessions, this feeling that all we have experienced and gained, however wonderful and widepread and incredible, is after all only a preface, a first chapter, a beginning; that there is more and more and more, far more, comes rather as a reminder of the amazing amplitude of God's huge largesse toward us, of the fullness with which He keeps heaping up grace upon grace. Even here and even now the Christian life is a glorious thing, rich, splendid, teeming with interests, so that whoso has once tasted it would not part with it for the whole round world. Yet all these happy years are only, as it were, an outer vestibule that leads, so the audacious faith insists, into things far more wonderful, a few acres of a narrow glen in a far spreading land that one day will be all our own. Even when old and stricken in years, even when others' hopes are fading, when for them it is chill autumn weather with their possessions falling one by one, how quickly now, and being blown about their feet like withering leaves, we are still only at our early spring, with all the glory of it still to come, and after that the fullness of the summer. For those who live for God and die with God the sunset has no melancholy. Rather, as Faber says, the 'days bury their golden suns in the dear hopeful west.' Travellers tell us that in flat lands far from any hills, sometimes when the sun is rising behind mountains so far off as usually to be quite invisible, suddenly for a moment those stand out obvious, and real, and very near. And then the sun mounts above them, and in a twinkling they are gone again, and there is only the accustomed flatness. But we saw; the hills are there. And at these solemn moments

when dear ones embark, beyond the cold black separating waters rise the hills bathed in perennial sunshine of a far-off splendid land. After God's marvellous goodness to us all our days there is still very much land to be possessed, nor have we drawn as yet more than a cupful of the broad unwearying eternal river of His overflowing purposes of grace toward us. We know not what the future holds, excepting this, that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him. That is sure, and that is still to come. We shall be like Jesus Christ. All this that we are now we are only for seventy years or so, but we shall be like Christ for an eternity. So infinitely much is there before us still to be possessed.

A. J. Gossip.

## Balaam the Soothsayer.

Josh. xiii. 22.—'Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among the rest of their slain.'

The character of Balaam offers us an enigma which has always exercised a great fascination for those interested in the analysis of the religious life. The early Christians, following the tradition of the Jews, saw in him the type of the false teacher, greedy of gain, enticing to immorality; and when similar teachers appeared in the Christian Church they were denounced as having 'followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing' (2 Pet. ii. 15), 'they ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire' (Jude 11, *cf.* Rev. ii. 14). To Bishop Butler the character seemed to present the type of self-deceit, the case of a man who longs to die the death of the righteous and yet live the life of the unrighteous; of one who refuses to listen to the first clear dictates of conscience that a thing is wrong, who tries to make a compromise with the Almighty, and to persuade himself that what he knows to be wrong may after all be right: 'he wanted to do what he knew to be very wicked and contrary to the express command of God; he had inward checks and restraints which he could not entirely get over; he therefore casts about for ways to reconcile this wickedness with his duty.'

And in the great religious stirring which moved English minds in the second quarter of the nineteenth century there was scarcely one leader of thought who did not turn back to look at this strange religious leader and endeavour to interpret his motives.

Newman saw in the tale the story of obedience without love. Balaam was the highly-gifted man who yet, in the main, is on the side of God's enemies; 'his end was not to please God, but to keep straight with Him; he was not content with ascertaining God's will, but he attempted to change it'; 'his endeavour was not to please God, but to please self without displeasing God.'

Thomas Arnold's interpretation is closely allied to this. Balaam was one who had the gifts of the Holy Spirit without the graces: he was one who set up his idols in his heart and yet went to enquire of God; and so God answered him according to his idols; and he was sent upon a course from which he could not turn back, and which ultimately led to his death.

Keble more simply follows the lead of the New Testament writers, and sees in his ruin the result of avarice:

> No sun or star so bright
> In all the world of light
> That they should draw to Heaven his downward eye:
> He hears the Almighty's word,
> He sees the Angel's sword,
> Yet low upon the earth his heart and treasure lie.

Maurice, in a sermon which shows much greater insight into the historical problem of the narrative, treats him as the heathen seer to whom God really speaks, and who yet becomes a false prophet because he has been ruined by the sense of his own strange power of insight, which he has tried to strengthen by charms and divinations until the spiritual has become unreal to him and national things have grown to be of the strongest attraction. So God strives to educate him by permitting him to feel the effects of his own self-will, by lifting him out of himself by the sight of a righteous nation; yet he falls back and his

language is the utterance of a melancholy spirit, conscious that he is not true to himself.

F. W. Robertson, taking selfishness as the root of his hollowness, dwells on the perversion of great gifts by ambition and avarice and the perversion of the conscience by insincerity.

All find a puzzle hard to read: 'Good God,' cries Bishop Butler, 'what an inconsistency, what a perplexity is here!' 'It was an almost inconceivable character,' writes Archbishop Benson, 'one dramatist only has ever lived who could have traced all the windings of a spirit so lofty and so depraved, through light so intense and through shadow so deathly.'

If we are to solve the riddle we must notice that the primary interest is not ethical but religious: the narrative is not a study in ethics, but an episode in the history of comparative religion: Balaam comes before us as a type of a lower religion which confronts that of Jehovah, which fails to conquer it, and which stands condemned for ever. The New Testament counterpart of Balaam is not so much Judas Iscariot as Simon Magus—he too a soothsayer, he too one to whom they all gave heed from the least to the greatest, he too attracted by a higher religion, he too with a heart not right with God but bent on avarice, he too, if tradition may be trusted, falling back from the highest that he sees and becoming a source of danger and corruption to the true believers. And the New Testament antithesis to Balaam is Saul—himself the representative of that which has become a lower religion in the contrasted glory of Christianity, himself half seeing the greater glory of the higher and kicking against the pricks, himself journeying to destroy the representatives of the higher, himself arrested in his journey by a message from heaven; but *he* listens wholeheartedly to the message, he is willing to sacrifice all for the higher, and the higher passes into his nature, and moulds it from the very centre.

Balaam, then, represents Gentile religion; he is essentially the soothsayer, whose fame spreads throughout the East, who has a supernatural power to bless and to curse, to whom ambassadors come with the rewards of divination in their hands, who takes his post on the mountain-top that thence his curse may be effective, who goes out to meet with enchantments, to whom the *Elohim* speak. It is quite true that he is also regarded as doing Jehovah's work: the angel of Jehovah meets him and Jehovah also speaks through his lips; and this may be explained either by the common supposition that a tradition of the true God lingered in the eastern country from which he came, or, perhaps more likely, the later Jehovistic narrator has felt how truly Jehovah had used Balaam for His own purposes, so that we have his later but truer way of describing what really happened. Gentile religion, with its instincts that point to a true God, though they have not yet learnt to worship Him, is brought face to face with the true religion, and against its will is made to bear witness to its essential truth. It is the *'testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ.'*

1. The method of Balaam's inspiration is Gentile and not Jewish. The description of it is very noble, but it is that of the entranced seer:

Balaam the son of Beor saith,
And the man whose eye was closed saith:
He saith, which heareth the words of God,
Which seeth the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, and having his eyes open.

Such a description draws nearer to a mechanical than to a dynamical view of inspiration; and so Josephus interprets it, for he makes Balaam say to Balak, 'The Spirit of God causes us to utter words such as he wills, *and speeches without our knowledge* . . . for when he has entered into us, nothing that is in us *is any longer our own.*'

There is surely a real line which separates this from the Jewish idea of the prophet as the friend of God, to whom He telleth His secrets, the essential characteristic of whom is 'moral converse with Jehovah.' Balaam's attitude before Balak, high and courageous as it is, is not the attitude of Isaiah before Ahaz or of Jeremiah before Jehoiachim or of John the Baptist before Herod, but rather of Teiresias before Œdipus, struggling to keep back the prediction that must give offence, yet forced

gainst his will to utter it. It is no doubt rue that, as the narrative proceeds, the heathen lement falls off, and Balaam approaches earer to the true prophet. 'And when Balam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, e went not, as at the other times, to meet with nchantments, but he set his face toward the ilderness,' *i.e.*, he looked down upon the tents f Israel, seeking no charms but drawing his nspiration for the future from the facts of the resent; yet his subsequent history shows how ttle any real change had entered into his soul. Origen notes that the Lord is said to put a ord into the mouth of Balaam and not into is heart; and though this verbal criticism annot be pressed, it points to a very real ruth—that Balaam's own essential character emains untouched by the revelation of which e is the organ. When the whole incident was ver, Balaam 'rose up, and went and returned o his place' the same man as he had ome. That wisdom which 'in all ages enterng into the holy souls maketh them friends of od and prophets' had not entered into him; e returned to his place a soothsayer still, with n unconverted heart.

He watch'd till morning's ray
On lake and meadow lay,
And willow-shaded streams, that silent sweep
Around the banner'd lines,
Where by their several signs
The desert-wearied tribes in sight of Canaan sleep.

He watch'd till knowledge came
Upon his soul like flame,
Not of those magic fires at random caught;
But true prophetic light
Flash'd o'er him, high and bright,
Flash'd once, and died away, and left his darken'd thought.

And can he choose but fear
Who feels his God so near,
That when he fain would curse, his powerless tongue
In blessing only moves?—
Alas! the world he loves
Too close around his heart her tangling veil hath flung.[1]

[1] J. Keble, *The Christian Year*, 105.

2. But the nature of the inspiration does not stand alone as marking the heathen type of religion. The venal character of the soothsayer, the rewards of divination carried to him, the promise to promote him to very great honour, find a parallel not in the true Jewish prophet but in the Greek soothsayer so often denounced for his venality by the Greek tragedians. And side by side with this venality of the prophet goes (how truly!) the thought of the venality of God. There is a striking parallel between the presents offered to the seer—the reward of divination, the offer of promotion, the mission of the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian, the second mission of princes more and more honourable than they—with the sacrifices offered from higher and higher heights to tempt Jehovah to give His curse. Yet here, too, it is striking to notice how Balaam himself, when brought into contact with the truth, gradually drops the heathen conception and rises to a nobler view of God. At first he calls on Balak to build for him seven altars, and to prepare seven bullocks and seven rams; together with Balak he offers on every altar a bullock and a ram: and he pleads this as a ground of prevailing with God. 'I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered up a bullock and a ram on every altar' (Nu. xxiii. 1-4). On the next occasion Balak alone builds the altars and offers the bullock and the ram, and Balaam no longer pleads this before God (14-16). On the third occasion he calls again upon Balak to build the altars and to make the offerings, but he himself goes not as at other times to meet with enchantments, but the Spirit of God comes upon him (xxxiii. 29—xxiv. 1). The degrading thought that God can be bribed by a few more offerings is burnt out of *his* soul at least, though it remains with the king and the prince of Moab, and stamps the whole incident with the stamp of heathenism.

3. No less clearly marked is the heathen conception of the curse of the soothsayer. Students of Arabic mythology tell us how strong was the belief among the Arabian tribes in what has been called the 'Fetich-power of the uttered word,' and how elaborately

organized the method for pronouncing it. The poet-seer was stationed at a sacred place, at a moment of religious service; he was supposed to be in alliance with the powerful spirits of evil, and in their strength to have power to force the god to do his will. Then in rhythmic chant he uttered his solemn imprecation—in the exact Arabian phrase, he shot forth 'the arrows of the night'—and so realistic was the belief in them that the man against whom they were aimed was supposed to be able to escape them only by lying down on his side till they had passed by. And Philo's description of Balaam is worth quoting in this context as showing the Jewish tradition of the terror felt of him. 'He was renowned above all men for his experience as a diviner and a prophet, as he had in many instances foretold to many people incredible and most important events: for on one occasion he had predicted heavy rain to one nation at the height of summer; to another a drought and burning heat in the middle of winter . . . he had predicted the inundations of rivers or their falling greatly and becoming dried up, and the departure of pestilential disease and ten thousand other things . . . his glory had spread everywhere and was continually increasing.' Now we know from Greek Tragedy and Greek History the power of a curse to impose itself upon the minds of men and to bring its fulfilment with it; and it is hard to imagine what effect it might have had upon Israel's history had there been known to have been uttered over it the curse of the most famous of Oriental seers, a curse such as lay upon the houses of Pelops and Alcmaeon; but theirs was at least a righteous curse, a curse upon unnatural vice, upon filial ingratitude, upon impiety: this curse implies a far lower conception. It is a curse, arbitrary, capricious, purchased by money: it is the curse of the weaker against the stronger because he is the stronger; it is the curse which strives by artificial methods to undermine God's natural differences between mankind; it is parallel to the love-charms by which lovers have striven again and again, aye and are said to strive still in parts of Christian England, to destroy their rivals. All that is meant by magic, by witchcraft, by the fascination of the evil eye is here arrayed against Israel and fails. The nation goes forward on its way free from the terror of the magic curse, and in the strength of this escape a later prophet is bold to scorn the magic of Babylon, even though the king himself 'stood at the parting of the way . . . he shook the arrows to and fro, he consulted the teraphim, he looked in the liver' (Ezek. xxi. 21).

¶ An interesting parallel has been quoted from later Jewish history. When, about the year 64 B.C., Hyrcanus was, with the help of the Arabian king Aretas, warring against Aristobulus and besieging him in Jerusalem, the soldiers in the besiegers' camp seized upon Onas, a righteous, God-loving Jew, who was held in high esteem because his prayers had brought rain in time of drought, and tried to compel him to utter solemn curses against Aristobulus and his party. But he refused to invoke God's curse in a civil war in which neither party seemed to him in the right: 'O God, King of the Universe,' he prayed, 'since those who stand with me are thy people and those who are besieged are thy priests, I pray thee neither to listen to the wish of those against these, nor to accomplish that which these ask for against those'; and the wicked among the Jews stoned him to death.[1]

## Following Wholly.

Josh. xiv. 8.—'I wholly followed the Lord my God.'

One of the greatest needs of our modern Christian life is that of recovering the sense of obligation to whole-heartedness which seems to be so largely lost. Men are satisfied with being party to the merely initial relationships of discipleship. They are content to know Christ as Saviour in a general sort of way, and to live a life which has a kind of drift Christward. But there is nothing strenuous about it. There is no compelling constraint. It is at best a haphazard thing with nothing of serious purpose and endeavour. They may be following Christ, but they are obviously not following Him loyally. They may be truly

[1] W. Lock, *The Bible and Christian Life*, 141ff.

His, but are certainly not wholly His. And here is a tremendous difference between being truly His and wholly His. There are multitudes of people who are His in the sense that they trust Him for salvation, receive His gifts, and are numbered among His followers, who are, however, in no wise wholly His. He is present in their lives to a limited extent, but is neither prominent nor pre-eminent there. He may be their undoubted Saviour, but is far from being their uncontested Sovereign. For 'other lords' successfully claim their devotion and dominate their doings. Hence their weakness and ineffectiveness as Christ's witnesses. For it is only the men that wholly follow Him who make any impression for Him upon the world's imagination and life. They alone are strengthened and satisfied with the gifts of which His fellowship is full. Everything depends upon the degree to which discipleship goes.

Compare such half-hearted lives with this testimony of Caleb, a testimony that has nothing of egotism or self-consciousness about it, but is just the plain declaration of an undeflected aim. He was speaking before people who knew him well, who had seen his manner of life during those years, and doubtless had marked its course sufficiently carefully to contradict such profession had it been in conflict with fact. That they did not do so is eloquent tribute to his quality. 'I have wholly followed the Lord' is certainly the unrebuked testimony of a good conscience. It is the witness of a man who has never steered except by the Pole Star, who has never neglected to measure his life by the line of God's standards, who has never contradicted the original intention and inspiration of his life; and who has lived out his life blamelessly before men. It does not profess a perfect attainment, only a perfect aim. It simply states that he had allowed no distance to come between him and God—distance of the sort which is created by knowledge of His will acquired but unacted on. As he followed Him the light of course grew clearer, his powers of perception became acuter, and his obligation consequently expanded. But he met increasing light with increasing consecration. He replied to enlarged responsibility by enlarged concentration of his powers upon the life-business of obedience.

When a man wholly follows the Lord, inevitable consequences of his consecration are seen in his life, and are easily recognized by those who are looking on.

1. In the first place such a man is delivered from the bondage of self. As most of us know by hard-won experience, we never really enjoy liberty until we submit to the law of God. This is true in every realm and sphere of our lives. The only possibility of liberation is in running the way of His commandments. Self-pleasing tends to self-weariness, and ends in utter captivity, until the man who lives to do his own will without any reference to God finds himself held hand and foot in strong fetters of his own forging. It becomes morally impossible for him to break the chains with which he has bound himself. He is in the grip of a tyrant, a strong man armed, who can be dispossessed only by 'The Stronger than he.' To all such the gospel of deliverance is phrased in an exhortation to follow the Lord wholly. For—

> Self is the only prison that can ever bind the soul!
> Love is the only angel who can bid the gates unroll!
> And when he comes to call thee, arise and follow fast;
> His way may lead through darkness, but it brings to light at last.[1]

To follow the Lord wholly is to be led out into the glorious liberty of His sons.

2. Further, every costly obedience strengthens moral fibre and increases moral vigour for further obedience and conflict. And the converse is also solemnly true. For every disobedience, however apparently trifling, hinders the ministry of Christ's grace in our hearts. Here is the awful potency of wilful sin, that it can put the Son of God to defeat and thwart His saving purposes.

¶ I had this brought home to me once in going through a large spinning-mill. There

[1] Henry Van Dyke.

I saw the delicate operation of reeling a number of fine linen threads, some three or four thousand, on various spools. As I watched the process with considerable interest, the machine suddenly stopped working. One of the delicate threads had snapped; and the machine was so finely adjusted as to stop automatically whenever a single strand broke. Nor could it be re-started until the broken thread was mended. And this mechanical process illustrates very clearly the spiritual principle. One known disobedience allowed, one condemned habit persisted in, one wrong relationship maintained, one unchecked indulgence which conscience has begun to question, and the ministry of Christ's grace is suspended.[1]

3. Then the man who wholly follows the Lord will certainly become like Him. This is the open secret of all transformation of disposition and character. There is reflective and reactive power in every spiritual resolution. As we follow Christ we cannot fail to acquire moral qualities which increasingly approximate us to Himself. Habitual fidelity to His commands is a purifying stream which enriches and fertilizes the whole of life's area. For unworthy ideals are replaced by His pure and lofty purposes. Imperfect powers are re-enforced by His gifts. Feeble efforts are made effective by His co-operation. All life is renewed unto holiness as men follow Him with girded loins and undivided hearts. When He is uncontested King He makes them unquestioned conquerors. Transcendent glory becomes triumphant grace. Caleb became a godly man by following God—and there is no other way.

¶ Religion does not just consist in stopping this sin and stopping that, and fleeing this temptation or that, but it consists in growing—not perfection, but growth—growing into the likeness of Christ. If a man's ideal is simply to stop sinning, his Christian life becomes monotonous. The man who knows how to play the violin goes to hear R—— play, and it dawns upon him that it will take at least another twenty years before he can play at all. The artist goes through the Turner gallery, and he finds it will take him a lifetime to copy the major points from Turner. The man who will sit down for twenty minutes in his room and look at the character of Jesus Christ feels his longest life not long enough; nay, that eternity itself is not long enough to approach the surpassing and infinite glory of that Figure. Then, a new sensation comes. He rises and—what? Lo! He is hungry and thirsty. He hungers and thirsts to live like *that*, or see in himself and in others the mind which was in Christ Jesus.[1]

[1] J. S. Holden.

4. Then also there are spiritual inheritances which are possessed only as we wholly follow the Lord. Hebron was promised to Caleb because of his faithfulness. After forty-five years of whole-hearted discipleship he came to claim his possession on this title. And his claim was allowed. All of which has a clear analogy in our lives. There are Hebrons which are ours under the promises of God. There are possessions in Christ—unsearchable riches, abundance of grace, power for the overcoming life, and all things that pertain to life and godliness. But they become ours in actual experience only as we follow Him exclusively. They are truly ours under the Covenant—but ours in actual enjoyment only as we fulfil our part of that Covenant. The Gospel 'whatsoever ye shall ask' is entirely conditioned by obedience to 'whatsoever I command you.' We impoverish ourselves beyond description if we allow anything to contest Christ's sovereignty in life. All things are ours when we are wholly His. To follow Him wholly is to become a prince. To do aught else is to become a pauper.

¶ When in Oxford, John Wesley read Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, and his treatise on *Christian Perfection*. These books convinced him more than ever of the absolute impossibility of being 'half a Christian.' The perception of the difference between the 'half' and the 'whole' Christian had come to him so early as the middle of 1725. In a letter to his mother he describes an interview with a friend in St. Mary's Church, Oxford, and in it the phrase 'a whole

[1] Henry Drummond.

Christian' occurs. Its use suggests that he had begun to see that there was a deeper meaning in the name Christian than he had supposed, and that it was his duty to discover it.[1]

## Caleb.

Josh. xvi. 14.—'He wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.'

This is the word of the historian. But it was first the word of God. In Num. xiv. 24 we read: 'My servant Caleb hath followed me fully.' So Caleb is a man who bears the hall-mark of the Lord's approval; and when a man is sealed with the approbation of God, we shall do well to gaze upon him with steady contemplation. 'We acquire the hue of that to which we cling.' Let us then place this hallowed type of character in the chamber of our ideals, that it may impress our own doings, and colour them with some of its own beauty.

1. Caleb had a constant sense of God. When Caleb left the camp and the tabernacle, where God's presence had visible witness in pillars of cloud and flame, and went out into a strange country, he did not lose the sense of the all-encompassing God. In the new conditions he experienced the delights of the old companionship. It is a fine spiritual sense that retains its sensitiveness everywhere. How few of us have as immediate a sense of God in the market-place as we have in the sanctuary! The change of places occasions the benumbment of the sense. Rightly regarded, the market is only another room in the spacious dwelling, and if our spiritual nerve were delicately refined it would thrill to the Lord's presence in one room quite as much as in another. How few of us are equally sure of God in the room called 'sorrow' and the room called 'joy!' Perhaps in sorrow we are all alive to God; in joy we miss Him. In our success God is an absentee; in adversity we discover Him. 'These things ought not so to be.' Whether we are in the lofty chamber which is the abode of light, or thrust into the dungeon-basement where the cheery ray is absent, we should have equal assurance that 'the Lord is with us.' Caleb did not lose touch with God when he left the familiar places. He was always practising the sense of the gracious Presence. We have a beautiful glimpse of his life's ambition revealed to us in one of his own words, 'If the Lord delight in us!' (Num. xiv. 8). That was the ambition which continually dwelt with him, and kept him in sensitive communion with God.

The sound of music through a columned aisle,
The chant of psalm and prayer,
The peace that falls when praise is hushed awhile
Betokens God is there.

The lilt of laughter on a sunny morn
That echoes through the air,
Where men and maidens bind the golden corn
Betokens God is there.

The din of cities where men earn their bread
And toil, oppressed by care,
Who live hard lives that others may be fed
—Ah, surely God is there.[1]

2. Caleb had the accurate perception which belongs to a quiet eye. Spiritual sensitiveness induced spiritual quietness. To feel God is to be freed from panic. To be free from panic is to have the ability to see things as they are. Spiritual assurance induces mental calmness. The vision is untroubled, and we reap 'the harvest of a quiet eye.' Spiritual uncertainty begets mental turbulence, and the vision is perverted. Things are exaggerated, and life is filled with alarms. The companions of Caleb had no sure touch of God, and so their minds were restless and their outlook was troubled. To them the land of Canaan was filled with giants, it abounded in terror, it engendered paralysing fear. To Caleb the land was 'an exceedingly good land, a land which floweth with milk and honey' (Num. xiv. 8).

So it is in common life. Men of unquiet vision see gigantic difficulties where the difficulties are only ordinary. These are the men who always bring 'evil report' whenever a pro-

[1] J. S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 83.

[1] H. L. Hubbard, *Epiphanies*, 9.

posal is made for some ennobling enterprise. In every road they see a 'lion,' and from every pilgrimage they are inclined to turn back. There is often no lion at all; it is the very painting of their fear. Men of imperfect vision see the mountains covered with hostile forces; the true vision sees the enemy, but also beholds the hosts of the Lord. If we would see things as they are, we require a quiet eye, and this becomes ours when we feel the presence of God. 'Let not your heart be troubled.' That was counsel for the panic-stricken. 'Believe in God; believe also in me.' That is the antidote to fear.

I have closed the door on Fear,
He has lived with me far too long,
If he were to break forth and reappear,
I should lift my eyes and look at the sky,
And sing aloud, and run lightly by;
He will never follow a song.

I have closed the door on Gloom,
His house has too narrow a view,
I must seek for my soul a wider room,
With windows to open and let in the sun,
And radiant lamps when the day is done,
And the breeze of the world blowing through.

3. Caleb coveted the post of difficulty as the place of honour. The man who feels God strongly, and who see things clearly, always covets the stiffest part of the field. Let me take this mountain, where the Anakim dwell, and where the cities are great and fenced; if the Lord be with me, I shall be able to drive them out! (*cf.* Josh. xiv. 12). Caleb chose the hardest task.

In the early part of the War some of our regiments were filled with a spirit of rebellion because they were being kept back from the front. They despised the place of safety, and longed for the post of peril. That is significant of the hunger that ought to prevail in the Christian life. We ought to ask for 'the mountain'! There are great mountains to be taken where the Anakim dwell. There are the mountains of drunkenness, of gambling, of lust, and commercial corruption. There is no better discipline for a young man than to enlist his strength in some righteous and unpopular cause. Let him set his name down for the taking of a mountain that is held by an unclean giant. The grappling with the heavy task will develop splendid moral muscles. Day by day he will acquire a finer spiritual apprehension. They who wrestle with hard tasks obtain a masculine grip of God. Choose the hard thing, and the choice is immediately rewarded with an increasing gift of Christ.

¶ Pizarro, the Peruvian explorer, once faced his soldiers on a day when their enterprise had run into perilous hazard. With his sword's point he drew a line on the sand from east to west and, turning to the south, he said to his followers, 'Friends and comrades! on that side are toil, hunger, nakedness, the drenching storm, desertion, and death; on this side, ease and pleasure. There lies Peru with its riches; here, Panama and its poverty. Choose, each man, what best becomes a brave Castilian. For my part I go to the south.' That sounds extraordinarily like the appeal of Jesus.[1]

4. Caleb received his reward. 'Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day.' For character does not go unrecompensed for ever. That would be a blot upon the moral government of God. Either in this life or in that which is to come there must verily be a reward for the righteous, as God is God and good is good. Caleb has had an overflowing cup in heaven these ages. But he had a reward whilst yet on the earth.

But Caleb had to wait a long, long time for his promised reward. For five and forty years he had to endure patiently without his inheritance. We too may have to wait through weary years for our reward. But 'to patient faith the prize is sure.' God has His own reasons for delay. These reasons are beneficent too. It is a discipline of the soul that we should tarry long ere our Hebron comes. But Hebron comes at length to Caleb and his children. 'Be patient therefore, brethren.' And for the heavenly Hebron, also, we must wait. Let us work diligently whilst we wait patiently.

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 158.

Caleb did his duty steadily those forty and five years of waiting. So let us do, and so shall our Hebron smile upon us, and on its serene heights no Anakim shall distress us through the Sabbatic ages of eternity.

Beloved, yield thy time to God, for He
Will make eternity thy recompense;
Give all thy substance for His Love, and be
Beatified past earth's experience.
Serve Him in bonds, until He set thee free;
Serve Him in dust, until He lift thee thence;
Till death be swallowed up in victory
When the great trumpet sounds to bid thee hence.
Shall setting day win day that will not set?
Poor price wert thou to spend thyself for Christ,
Had not His wealth thy poverty suffiecd:
Yet since He makes His garden of thy clod,
Water thy lily, rose, or violet,
And offer up thy sweetness unto God.[1]

## The Dowry.

Josh. xv. 19.—'Thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.'

Caleb had given his daughter Achsah a noble dower; but she does not seem to have been altogether contented with it; for, when she came to her husband, we find her egging him on to make a further request of the old man. The bridegroom, however, seems to have refused to have anything to do with the matter. Probably he felt that, after being so generously dealt with, it would be ungracious to ask for more. Possibly, too, he surmised that what in a daughter would be looked on as the pardonable boldness of a child would in him be justly resented. At all events he kept in the background, and let his prudent bride engineer the transaction. She was quite equal to the occasion. She tactfully pointed out to her father that the portion he had given her was in the Sudan of Palestine. It was far from the fertilizing streams of the Lebanon. It had none of the 'precious things' of the 'lasting hills' about it like Ephraim or Naphtali. It was a south land, subjected to perpetual drought. Then she directed his attention to a lovely oasis which lay quite near, but still outwith her promised dower. 'Thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water.' And Caleb honoured her request, giving her more than she expected—not only one oasis but two. 'He gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.'

1. God has given to us as human beings a glorious dowry; He has given us great gifts; He has made the place of our habitation beautiful. The very joy of living is a great thing.

O, the wild joys of living! . . .
How good is man's' life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!

Ours is a glorious heritage. There is much in it to delight the soul, to lift us out of discontent and grumbling, to fill us with pure joy. When the sun is pouring his golden light on our portion here, how bewitching it appears! The wealth of Nature, the fullness of liberty, happy circumstances, the freedom from oppression, the pleasures of knowledge and of the mind, the richness of our earthly heritage—these are, indeed, a dower worthy of the sons of God.

2. God has not given us great wealth, but He has given us many blessings; He has given us enough of this world to make our lot bright and cheerful, but He does not thereby exhaust His kindness to us. There are better things in store for those who will take them—fellowship with Himself, communion with the Son, and joy in the Holy Ghost. There is a joy the world knows nothing of—the consciousness of God's presence here, and the assurance that at His right hand there are pleasures evermore. The rills from the upper springs trickle down into the field of life, and make it sweet and fresh. Do you know what it is

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

that makes the face of that bed-ridden saint shine so brightly? Do you know what it is that gives such sweetness to his song? It is just this, that he realizes that God has granted to him his request, and has given him the upper and the nether springs. He is under a sense of God's protection, he is in His hands, he has in his trials the satisfaction of His presence, the assurance of His love and forgiveness. In the midst of life's fitful fever God will keep him calm. He can sing with truth 'The Lord is my shepherd.' With the Psalmist of old he can say:

'O thou my soul bless God the Lord; and all that in me is
Be stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless.'

Thanks be to Thee, God,
Wielder of Nations,
Lord everlasting!
For all the joy of life
Winsome and wealthful,
Bairns' love and Wife's love,
Heart-trust of comrades,
War-weal and hearth-gear,
All I have here below
Fared for or gotten,
Now, oh my Maker mild,
Most need have I that Thou
Good-speed my ghost:
Yea, that my Soul to Thee
Safely may journey,
Safe to Thy Kingdom,
Lord of the Angels![1]

## The Cities of Refuge.

Josh. xx. 2.—'Appoint out for you cities of refuge.'

Cities of refuge were needed because the 'avenger of blood' was recognized as performing an imperative duty. 'Blood for blood' was the law for the stage of civilization then in existence. The weaker the central authority, the more need for supplementing it with the wild justice of personal avengement. Neither Israel nor the surrounding nations were fit for the higher commandment of the Sermon on the Mount. 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth' corresponded to their stage of progress; and to have hurried them forward to 'I say unto you, Resist not evil' would have led only to weakening the restraint on evil, and would have had no response in the hearers' conscience. It is a commonplace that legislation which is too far ahead of public opinion is useless, except to make hypocrites. And the Divine law was shaped in accordance with that truth. Therefore the *goel*, or kinsman-avenger of blood, was not only permitted but enjoined by Moses. But the evils inherent in his existence were great. Blood feuds were handed down through generations, involving an ever-increasing number of innocent people, and finally leading to more murders than they prevented. But the thing could not be abolished. Therefore it was checked by this institution.

Six cities were apportioned, three on each side of the Jordan, central to the adjacent districts, and easily accessible. Thither the manslayer who had killed any person unwittingly and unawares might flee from the pursuit of the next of kin. The roads were kept in good repair; clearly-written directions at the cross-ways indicated the route; and, according to Jewish tradition, runners, learned in the law, were stationed at various stages to direct and help the fugitive.

Once within the city walls, all breathless with his flight, the manslayer waited at the entering of the gate of the city till he had stated his case to the elders, who had the right of admitting him provisionally into the city. On the appearance of the avenger of blood, the cause seems to have been finally adjudicated; and if it were clearly shown before the assembled people that there was no animosity in the blow that caused death, the manslayer was permitted to remain there, until the death of the high priest then in office.

A picture is presented to the soul in these cities of refuge, and in the institutions connected with them, of Jesus, the sinner's Refuge from the storm and Covert from the judgment of the law.

[1] *Earl Brythnoth's Thanksgiving*, translated from the Anglo-Saxon by Dean Stubbs.

(1) The first point that strikes us, and that shows forth Jesus Christ and His willingness and power to save, is this: these cities were all *easy of access.* God took all the difficulties out of the way. First, they were all upon the level plain. If you read the 20th chapter of Joshua and take the map and look at the land you will be struck with this—that not one of them was built upon a mountain, not one of them upon a hill, but all in the valley or upon the plain. What does it mean? Why, it means that a man anxious and fleeing for his life must have no weary mountain to climb. There, upon the level plain, is the city whose welcome walls invite him for refuge. And then observe another fact about them, proving the ease of access which God had arranged. If you look at the land of Palestine you observe that it is divided nearly longitudinally, that is, from north to south, by a river at times broad and wide and deep, and with a mighty current—the Jordan. Now, let us suppose that God had put the cities of refuge, on one side of Jordan only. Here comes a poor manslayer; he is fleeing for his life, and he reaches the river. There is no bridge; he has no boat; he cannot swim; and yet there within sight of him is the welcome city. 'Oh,' he says in his bitter despair, 'God's promise has brought me so far only to mock me.' But God said, 'Let there be six cities, three on each side of the river; one north, one in the middle, one in the south, on one side; one in the south, one in the middle, one on the north on the other side.' What does it mean? Why, it means this, that wherever there was a poor guilty manslayer there was a city of refuge. Wherever there is a sinner in this great universe of God there is a Saviour. No river to cross over, no bridge required.

¶ Of the late Rowland Bateman, one writes: 'I went to see him one day in Narowal, and knocked at his door: there was no answer. I did that three times and got no answer. I opened the door, and went in, and he was there. I told him I knocked at his door three times, and he gave no answer. He said, "Why did you knock?—you ought to have come in without knocking. My house is open to every one: they can come at any time."'[1]

(2) But every city, while built in a plain, *lay at the foot of a hill.* That was of very great importance, for this reason: the poor refugee, fleeing for his life, might possibly not be able to discover the city, but if he was in the least difficulty someone might stop him, and say, 'Look yonder, see that mountain whose top towers to heaven; make straight for there, and at its base you will find the city.' And we sinners may say the same. Look at yonder mountain; it is called Calvary. We shall not be able to get to its top, only Jesus went there; but at its base salvation waits for us.

(3) Another fact of great importance about these cities—the most important fact of all, without which all other facts would be useless—is that *within these walls was perfect safety.* God had said it; Jehovah's word was staked on it. Perfect safety. God's honour was at stake. Every man who fled inside that city should be saved. That man has fled in there, and yonder comes the avenger of blood, quick after him, with his knife gleaming. He calls out the elders: tells his case. 'My brother was killed last night, the guilty man has fled here. That is the guilty man. The blood upon his garments tells it.' And the elders turn to the guilty man and say, 'You hear his words. What have you to say?' The guilty man falls at the feet of the elders, and cries—'Sires, it is true I killed the man last night. I did it in a moment of haste and passion, but Jehovah said that if one such as I fled here he would be safe, and I plead the promise and the oath of Jehovah that within these walls I am safe.' And the elders, turning to the avenger, say, 'You hear his answer. We have nothing more to say.' Just so Christ can save to the uttermost. We may come with our foul sins, but Christ can save us. Satan cannot, dare not, drag us from the arms of God when we plead the promise and the blood of Jesus.

None other Lamb, none other Name,
None other Hope in heaven or earth or sea,

[1] R. Maconachie, *Rowland Bateman*, 132.

None other Hiding-place from guilt and shame,
None beside Thee.

My faith burns low, my hope burns low,
Only my heart's desire cries out in me
By the deep thunder of its want and woe,
Cries out to Thee.

Lord, Thou art Life tho' I be dead,
Love's Fire Thou art, however cold I be:
Nor heaven have I, nor place to lay my head,
Nor home, but Thee.[1]

## A Memorial.

(CHURCH DEDICATION).

Josh. xxii. 10.—'And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to.'

The children of Israel, when they had crossed the Red Sea, marched almost due north to the conquest of Canaan; but their cowardice when the report of the spies was brought proved their incompetence for the task before them. They wandered, therefore, in the wilderness for many weary years, and their descendants approached the land from the east. Hence, before they crossed the Jordan, large and fair tracts of the country were overrun, and in these the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh were disposed to take up their abode. The leaders of Israel were content that this should be so, but very properly urged that, as the conquest of the whole country was before them, and fiercer struggles than any that they had yet known, so large a deduction from the strength of their fighting men could not be allowed. The men of the two and a half tribes must therefore march with their brethren to the attack upon the heathen; and not until the conquest had to a considerable extent been achieved, not until the Israelites had gained a permanent footing in the promised territory, could they dispense with the co-operation of their brethren from beyond Jordan.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

The service demanded had been loyally rendered, and now the moment had arrived when it was possible for those tribal warriors to go back to their own land, to rejoin the wives and children whom they had left behind, and to sit down in contented security to enjoy the possessions they had earned so hardly. Eastward, then, once more they marched; but when they came to where the waters of the Jordan were roaring before them they felt, as they had not felt before, how marked a barrier of division would exist between them and their brethren of the other tribes; they suddenly realized how possible it was that their descendants should fall away from the common heritage of faith and renown which belonged to the whole race; how, in fact, it was only too likely that they would become a separate people. Against this all their natural instincts, all their pride of race, and all their honourable traditions revolted. But how was it to be prevented? One thing, at least, they could do. They could build a huge altar of stone, or some monument altar-shaped. They could build it on the western side of the Jordan before they finally crossed to their home. They could make it so large that whenever their children looked across the waters of Jordan westward their eyes would be caught and challenged by this remarkable object, and they would naturally ask, 'What is that huge thing that we see?' Then the old glorious stories would be told them. They would be reminded that the blood of their fathers had helped to win the country on that side; that the men who dwelt there were not men of an alien race, but children of the common father, Abraham; not worshippers of other gods, but of the one God, the God of the Covenant. So this memorial would help to keep alive the memory of the providential guidance, the memory of the unique call upon the race, the memory of their common heritage in Israel and in Israel's God. Accordingly they went to work; many strong, willing hands toiled at the great task; and, having built their altar, with lightened and gladdened hearts they crossed the river and settled on their homesteads. They had raised a monument, which spoke to them of the past with its memories of

glory and of shame; which spoke to them of the present with its high duties and responsibilities; and which reminded them that those responsibilities were not of the passing day, but stretched forward into the future with its difficulties yet to be faced, its duties yet to be discharged, its victories yet to be won.

Now that great altar of olden time hard by the Jordan may well teach us some lessons to-day.

1. First, let us notice *the proper jealousy of the elders.* When the chiefs of the tribes of Israel heard of this altar they arose in great alarm and went down to their brethren, the two and a half tribes, to demand an explanation. Their jealousy was hasty, it was ignorant and uncharitable, but it was not unnatural. It arose, indeed, from a misunderstanding. They imagined that the eastern men were wishful to do the exact opposite of that which was in their hearts; they took the altar to be a sign and a means of division, whereas it was intended to be a symbol of and an influence for unity. Such misunderstandings arise often and naturally. Men look at what others are doing; they do not stay to inquire, they assume they know all about it, they read their own notions into what they see, and hence they come to unwise and uncharitable opinions. It is surely necessary that Christian men, in judging each other's work, should cultivate a spirit of candour, should be anxious to be clear in judgment, should assume the better motive until the worse is proved; and should remember that, within the limits of what is right, there is room for wide difference of taste, even where there is equal loyalty to the truth and equal anxiety for its maintenance.

But this jealousy, though mistaken, was natural; and it was a failing which 'lean'd to virtue's side,' which arose out of their loyalty to a great principle. The Jewish religion was a protest against the worship of many gods, and a constant assertion of the unity of the Divine Being. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God' was the mighty keynote of all its worship. As there was one God, there was to be but one altar; the Jewish religion made no provision for a second. Whenever the Jewish people relapsed into idolatry, as, alas! they often did, there sprang up other centres of religious worship. Whenever a second altar was raised an outrage was offered to God, and deadly peril threatened the Jewish people. The leaders of Israel were right in being jealous of the erection of any new altar. They knew that it meant the worship of a new god. And there is a jealousy which *we* may well cherish. For in Christianity, which is the perfect flower of Judaism, there is but one God, and one altar; there can be no second altar. Once did Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and then for ever sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The cross whereon the Divine Victim bled is the one altar of the Christian faith.

And their jealousy was stimulated by another proper fear—the division of the Church and of the nation. They feared lest there should be another centre of the people's religion and worship. A religion which materializes our conceptions of the Divine presence and the Divine indwelling is necessarily divisive in its tendency. It reduces the Church to a level of sect, that is, of a part cut off from the one object of the Church of God, and it inevitably opens chasms deep and impassable between the various sections of society. What a lamentable spectacle do we see to-day as a result of the false and narrow conceptions of the Church of God which are so diligently preached in our midst. Not only is intercommunion between various Christian bodies rendered impossible, but the relations of the various parts of society are powerfully affected. Clerical exclusiveness breeds a social caste as unreasonable, if not as cruel, as the caste that curses India. The true unity of the people, as well as the true unity of the Church of Christ, is impossible unless there be recognized but one altar, one Priest, one Victim, and that for evermore. If we look into the matter conversely we are led to the same conclusion. The one altar involves the conception of the true unity of Christ's Church. It must be so if there be but one centre. If there be but one altar and one sacrifice all must come to it for pardon and cleansing, and, coming from every point, they

will inevitably at last find themselves side by side.

¶ Christendom, as the Master saw it, ought to be visibly and undeniably one thing from end to end, bounded by positive outlines compact, concentrated, solid. It would not lie loose, weltering, vague, inorganic; but would be upgathered into a single whole that would move as one when it moved at all. One heart would beat within it, one food nourish it, one brain direct it, one interest absorb it. Throughout it all, communication would be open, penetrative, quick, unhindered; one joy would radiate, one sorrow becloud it; one soul would fill it, one speech break from its lips. Nor would there be any part within it that lacked its sustenance, for all would be in common.

And, so harmoniously formed, through it would pass unchecked the Glory of Him who made it for Himself. God's mind, God's meaning, God's presence—these would be assured to all; for His Church would be to Him a body, an organ of visible expression, a medium of perfect communication. Christ would have a mouth to speak through, and hands to touch us, and feet wherewith to move abroad, and a voice by which to call. There would be no mistake where the risen Jesus was to be found. All who had eyes to see could tell where He was, for He would possess a Body upon earth, which would evidence and pledge His presence.[1]

2. Notice, secondly, *the anxiety of the fathers.*

(1) They were very anxious to have a symbol of unity. They belonged to the chosen race, they were heirs of the promise, the covenant of God stretched its broad shadow over them as well as over Judah. The fact that the river rolled between them and their brethren could not divide them from their spiritual heritage, but it might perhaps tend to hide it from them, it might in course of time obscure the memory of the common right in the blessing. Distance and the consequent difficulty of travel might weaken their own sense of brotherhood and privilege. This danger would increase as generation followed generation. They themselves, who had borne a part in every conflict, could never forget the battle or the victory; but to their children those memories might become dim, might become even as mere myths, and so they desired a symbol, the existence of which could be accounted for only by the facts symbolized, and the sight of which, exciting curiosity and comment, should keep the glorious facts alive amongst them.

And they were surely right. Symbols and monuments are useful, the human mind requires them, and men in all ages and lands have provided them. Erected on the sites of great battles, such as Waterloo and Quebec; to commemorate great discoveries, such as chloroform; or great inventions, such as the steam-engine—they are designed to keep green the memory of great men and great deeds. The busy world is only too apt to forget its benefactors and to lose trace of the events which have been mightiest in moulding its fortunes, so the instinct of men has led them to keep alive precious memories by monumental symbols. And the principle has been recognized by God Himself, and has been embodied in the institutions of the Church. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a symbol, a memorial service in which we do show forth the Lord's death till He come. By its frequent observance the Church recalls to the mind of its members and the attention of the thoughtless world the supreme fact of human history.

By Christ redeemed, in Christ restored,
We keep the memory adored,
And show the death of our dear Lord
Until He come.

His body broken in our stead
Is here, in this memorial bread,
And so our feeble love is fed
Until He come.

The drops of His dread agony,
His life-blood shed for us, we see;
The wine shall tell the mystery
Until He come.

And thus that dark betrayal night
With the last advent we unite,

[1] H. Scott Holland, *Helps to Faith and Practice*, 185.

By one blest chain of loving rite,
Until He come.[1]

(2) But, again, those fathers were anxious for a link with the past. They were unwilling that the continuity of their history should be broken. They, and their children after them, would be impoverished if the memories of the past should be lost. Some of them might be memories of shame, but even therein were precious lessons of warning; and many of them were memories of triumph invaluable for the inspiration to duty and to enterprise which they conveyed. Those old heroes were unwilling that the past with its lessons should fade away and disappear; and they were right. How much we owe to the past, though we are often unconscious of the debt! Our position, our mental quality, the balance of our faculties, our peculiar character—have come to us through the mingling of many strains, and the influence of a thousand varying circumstances. Our mental conceptions arise out of the heritage of ideas which we find before us when we come into the world, possessed by all minds as a common endowment and embodied in a multitude of forms, literary, mechanical, social, religious. What magnificent possessions the past hands on to us! The poorest lad, before he can speak plainly, possesses ideas of things which to the wisest men of the past age would have seemed wild dreams; and of this we may be sure, that all true progress in the future must be built upon the achievements of the past. Whether in statesmanship or in Church affairs, whether in science or in philosophy, success will never be achieved by breaking the continuity, by devising systems which, like the paper constitution of the celebrated Frenchman, have their roots in nothing at all.

And so it is in the highest domain. All religion and religious life derives its existence from many strains of thought and feeling; and while any mere slavish worship of the past would be unworthy of men who live in the full light of these days of privilege and knowledge, he sadly lacks both reverence and wisdom who does not carefully study the past and learn, so far as he may, all its lessons, whether of warning or of encouragement. However our methods of work may need to be modified with the changing events of this world, only a spirit of absolute devotion to God and to the salvation of souls, which burned in the breasts of our fathers, will lead us on to victory like theirs; and whilst nothing but the Divine Spirit living in our souls can empower us for the tasks to which we are called, no human means will be so helpful to us as to study carefully the methods by which our fathers conquered, and to catch the blessed contagion of their spirit of love and fire.

(3) And, especially, these people were fearful lest their children should lose their part in the original heritage of the Covenant. Many causes would favour this. Distance, which made it impossible for them to attend the great national festivals; difference of habits occasioned by the different surroundings of their life; the influence of neighbouring idolatry; intermarriage with the tribes hard by—all these things would make it only too likely that, after one or two generations, their children would fall away from the faith of Israel. If by the sight of this great altar overlooking the Jordan they could be reminded of God's claim upon them and God's covenant with them and God's dealing with their fathers, perhaps they might be preserved from the apostasy which would otherwise ruin them.

Who does not sympathize with this anxiety of the fathers of the ancient days? It has always been a marked characteristic of truly godly men that they have been anxious for their children's salvation. 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!' is a prayer which has often found echo in the hearts of men. Love itself becomes more true and tender when it is sanctified by the indwelling Spirit. Then, too, the successes or failures of life become properly discriminated. Men who see the invisible estimate more correctly things temporal and things eternal. The chief solicitude for their children comes to be not that they should be rich or fashionable, but that they should be good. The conversion of his children, their becoming heartily attached to the cause of God,

[1] George Rawson.

becomes therefore the chief anxiety of a good man's heart.

¶ At a children's meeting held in Walsall by Mrs. Booth, their eldest child, William Bramwell Booth, 'gave himself to Christ.' The incident is related by Mrs. Booth in a letter which is very characteristic and enlightening:

For some little time I had been anxious on his behalf. He had appeared deeply convicted during the Cardiff services, and one night at the circus I had urged him very earnestly to decide for Christ. For a long time he could not speak, but I insisted on his giving me a definite answer, as to whether he would accept the offer of salvation or not. I shall never forget the feeling that thrilled through my soul when my darling boy, only seven years old, about whom I had formed such high expectations with regard to his future service to the Master, deliberately looked me in the face and answered 'No!'

It was, therefore, not only with joy, but with some little surprise that I discovered him in one of my Walsall meetings kneeling at the Communion rail among a crowd of little penitents. He had come out of his own accord from the middle of the hall, and I found him squeezed in among the rest, confessing his sins and seeking forgiveness. I need not say that I dealt with him faithfully, and to the great joy of both his father and myself, he then and there received the assurance of pardon.[1]

3. Lastly, let us learn *the lessons of the altar*—some of them, at all events. It would speak to the tribes of a unity independent of place and of outward circumstances. So long as the blood of Abraham was in their veins, and Abraham's God was their God, no Jordan current could sever them in twain! It would speak to them also of their special relation to God and of His peculiar care over them. He had chosen them from among the tribes of men; He had made them a people who were not a people. The history of their fathers had been an unswerving pursuit of His Divine and declared purpose; and their deliverance from Egypt, their discipline in the wilderness, and their final triumph had shown how faithful was the word and the promise of the Lord. This monument would remind them of the transforming and energizing power of faith. How marvellous was the change in these very people! Only a little while ago they were a horde of slaves, bearing in their cowardice, their ingratitude, their feebleness of purpose, the manifest degradation which slavery always inflicts. Now they were victors of many a hard won field against some of the fiercest and most warlike races of the world. And that which had made the change in their character was their realization of the presence and power of God. This had made cravens into heroes; this had made slaves and exiles into a self-respecting and victorious nation. How could they forget this if they looked across the Jordan and saw their monumental altar? Not far away from it was the site of Jericho, where they had received a wonderful object lesson. There they had learned that the skill and courage of the warrior are of no avail in themselves, yet victories are possible to men of faith without shield or battering-ram or sword. 'We can do all things through God which strengtheneth us' was the lesson which it taught them, and still teaches us. And so did the monument speak loudly to them of the future. The faith which had made them strong would keep them strong. They had other victories to win; their enemies would not let them sit at ease among their conquests; but no evil could overtake them, no weapon formed against them could prosper whilst they maintained their simple loyalty to the God of their fathers. All this the great altar would cry to them across the rolling river.

Are we not reminded to-day of God's providence over us as a people? Has He not led us by a way that we knew not? In the rise and development of our foreign missionary enterprise, in directing us to fields in which our young and ardent zeal might be rewarded by rapid and wide success, in reserving the difficult attack upon the great systems of the East for our well-tempered purpose, and our highest Christian principle, we see His hand over us for good. In the rise and progress of our Home Missionary enterprise, which, by various experiments and experiences, alike of

[1] H. Begbie, *Life of William Booth*, i. 323.

success and of failure, has brought our Church to the ardent wish and resolute purpose to seek and to save the lost of our own nation, we see the hand of God preparing us to do our share in dealing with the social problems which now agitate the nation. Surely God is with us indeed and of a truth. As He was with our fathers, so is He with us, so will He be with our children even to the latest generation. In this faith, with hearts confident in God, we dedicate our monument to Him to-day.

## Public Responsibility.

**Josh. xxii. 16.—'Thus saith the whole congregation of the Lord, What trespass is this that ye have committed?'**

This was the speech which the children of Israel made to the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, when they built an altar by Jordan, 'a great altar to see to.' Might not the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh do what they pleased about altar-building? Did they not live in a free country? What right had anybody to interfere? These are the questions we would ask to-day. The questions of frivolity never change; they never acquire depth, solemnity, dignity of the highest kind. The questions of frivolity are impetuous, selfish, indicating irritability, jealousy, and fear of the overthrow of personal independence. Personal independence, forsooth! there is no such thing when life comes to its last and truest analysis. The children of Israel had a right to inquire about the altar which the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had built. We cannot lift a hand without compromising somebody. Life is much more subtle, delicate, sensitive, responsible than some of us have ever imagined. It is not a rough vulgar clod; it is a spirit, a wondrous subtlety, touched at a million points by a million ministries; out of it goes what is incalculable as to influence and as to destiny. It is of consequence to the universe what the least child in all the nurseries of the world thinks or does. The universe is a great heart, filling all things, and hearing all things, and wondering all things concerning its inhabitants, its populations, its interests.

1. There are common rights entrusted to us. They belong to every man. No man has a right to coin a shilling of his own. The shilling is silver metal, and here is a skilled man who can turn base metal into all the appearance of real current coin; he can make an excellent head and an excellent legend, and it would puzzle the craftiest to discover the simulation. Has he not a right to do it? Has he not a right to use his own skill? Has he to wrap up his talent in a napkin? He will not be allowed to coin a single penny piece; he must go to the mint for every coin he has. The coin belongs to the poorest man and to the richest in the realm. It is the current, the circulating coin; and wherever it goes it must carry with it the special value, either in token or in substance. We all acknowledge that to be the case. But we do not all carry our acknowledgment to its larger issues. Yet these issues are in it, and God will find them, and will say at the last, 'Thou wicked and slothful servant! out of thine own mouth I condemn thee: thou knewest . . . thou oughtest therefore.'

Suppose we carry on the admission respecting the coinage, and come to the higher matter of language. No man has a right to alter or palter with the language of a country. Herein the law is sound and good, that all words must be interpreted in their plain and honest meaning, such as would be attached to them by the general understanding of the country. We cannot live upon esoteric explanations. The law will not allow us to change words and to use them in perverted meaning. Language must be as current as coin. You are not allowed to call tenpence a shilling in arithmetic or in commercial transactions. There is no right of trespass. Why not recognize this in morals? We recognize it in footpaths, in currency, in the construction of documents with their clauses and their covenants. We have a mother tongue and we appeal to that mother tongue for its own best meaning: why not go into the region of

morals? There is no right of drunkenness. May not a man get drunk when he pleases? No. No man has a right to breathe an unsavoury breath in the common air. No man has a right to reel home. He offends the womanhood of the world, the childhood, the delicacy, the honour of the land. He must come home upright, straight, sane.

2. The application of this principle would make society its own censor, would deliver us from the vicious influence of many a shallow sophism, would develop the true meaning of the doctrine that each man is his brother's keeper. There are no self-rights in the narrowest sense of the term. Why are there no self-rights? Because there is no self. Self was destroyed the moment the second person came upon the scene of the world. We shall never get right so long as we maintain that there is a self, a self-interest, a self-idolatry, a self-trust. In Christ every man is part of every other man. We are members one of another. In the great commonwealth of the Cross, whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it; whether one member rejoice there is common laughter in the household, sweet jollity, true gladness, for the hand has been honoured, or the head, or the foot. This is the Christian commune; not a commune of robbery, but a commune of sympathy.

Suppose there should be a great theological discussion in the Anglican Church; suppose a Nonconformist should interpose and make some contribution to the controversy: or suppose the case to be directly opposite, there is a controversy, let us assume, in Nonconformity, and some Anglican divine offers a contribution towards its solution: has either party the right to say, This business is ours, and not yours? Theology is not of private trusteeship; theology belongs to the whole Church. Every man has a right to interpose when the great terms God, truth, honour, life, are concerned in any degree. It may be a rough and unwelcome way of intervening; by so much as the way is rough and unwelcome it may be rebuked: but the right of interference is an eternal trust. The Church belongs to every man. Every Church is part of the whole household of God. There is, therefore, assuming earnestness, sincerity, and intelligence, no such thing as wanton interference with the affairs of any other Church. No Church has any affairs to its own. By taking to it the name of Christ it takes to itself the expanse of infinity and all the rights which go with brotherhood in the Saviour.

3. This law of mutual oversight includes and involves all institutions, agencies, and ministries now at work in the education and government of the world.

(1) Schools have no right to teach what they like. Every parent must be a school-inspector. Every parent must inquire what the child is drinking in; because its mental and spiritual health depends upon what is imbibed at the fountains of instruction. You cannot give away your parental rights in this matter. You must not allow your child to be poisoned. You would not allow him to be poisoned by chemical compounds; will you allow him to be poisoned by false reasoning, false morality, or by any of the subtle spiritual ministries which are brought to bear upon his motive and his action?

(2) We have a right to inquire into all apprenticeships. No parent has a right to apprentice his child to a bad trade. The child may have but poor rights of protest: before the law he is only an infant, and a minor may not be heard at the great bar; but there is a greater bar at which a child must be heard, and must be heard in the light and under the suggestion of general human experience: and no man has a right to apprentice his child to any trade that is dishonourable, impure, and unworthy. Do not say the child will grow out of it. He may never do so. You put him into it, and if he goes to hell you must go with him. You cannot be allowed to part with the child when you like. The child has rights; he says, You set me in this connection; in the most impressionable period of my life you subjected me to these influences. I resisted, protested, reasoned with you, and you forced me into these environments, and now that my hands are taken off and my eyes put out and my whole inner nature is diseased, will you allow me to go to hell alone, an orphan in ever-

lasting darkness? If you have got wrong in this particular, retrieve that wrong as soon as you can; bring the child back, pay the penalty, and be true to God and honour, to Christ and righteousness.

Too late the gift of splendid wings—
The moth was wounded when a worm.
The vain desire of better things
Blighting all good yet quick in germ.
Condemned, despite its flutterings,
To crawl through all a sad life's term;
Too late the gift of splendid wings—
The moth was wounded when a worm.

Though formed for flight, it feebly clings
To crumbling clods with feet infirm;
Oh, glad release that Winter brings
From mockery of the golden derm!
Too late the gift of splendid wings,—
The moth was wounded when a worm!

(3) We have a right to interfere with the whole question of companionship. 'The companion of fools shall be destroyed.' If you see any young man forming a wrong companionship, and you can prove that companionship to be wrong, you must not be silent. You may not be able to dissolve that companionship, but you can protest against it; you can point out your reasons, you can show all the urgency of a truly Christian nature, and this you are bound to do.

¶ Evil companionship spoils more good lads than perhaps anything else. Walter had an argument with his mother.

'I don't see why I may not go with Robertson. I know he sometimes swears and does things of which you disapprove, but I have been better brought up. I should think you might trust me. Perhaps I can do him good.'

'Walter,' replied his mother, 'take this glass of water, and put just one drop of ink into it. Only one drop.' He did so.

'Oh, mother, who would have thought that one drop would blacken a whole glass so!'

'Yes, it has quite changed its colour. Now put one drop of clear water into it, and restore its purity,' said mother.

'Now, mother, you are laughing at me. Not one drop, nor a dozen, nor fifty, will do that.'

'No, my son; and therefore I cannot allow one drop of Robertson's evil character to mingle with your immature one, carefully as you have been trained. Many drops of your society will make no impression on him.'[1]

(4) We must exercise this oversight in all literature. To-day it is impossible to say what influence is being exerted by corrupt publications. We ought to remember that there are various sections of literature; we have not only the Bodleian Library and the British Museum, we have our home literature and our perambulator literature, our stealthily-purchased and stealthily-perused literature, the books that we hide and read when it is thought we are asleep. Has the Christian Church no right of oversight in these matters? There may be no right of mere police censorship, but there should be such a creation of public sentiment that a bad book shall be worse than a spoken oath; for the oath may be spoken in a moment's passion, but the book abides, and reappears, and waits, and poisons by its very presence. May I not read what I like? No: what you read you may digest; what you digest comes up again in the form of manhood and conduct. Society may not be able to exercise a directive and controlling influence at the point of thought, but when that thought is developed into action society comes down upon you with its approbations or its censures. But in the Christian Church we ought not to wait until we find merely magisterial right to interfere; we are to be guided by spiritual intuitions and by holy suggestions and by sacred standards; and we must therefore do our utmost to put down all vicious reading. Does this mean that we are to put down all reading that is interesting, vivacious? Nothing of the kind. Dull reading is vicious. There can be no dull reading where there is real truth and real earnestness. Do not seek to discredit the creations of genius, allow genius a cage as large as the firmament to fly in; but when genius becomes debased, debasement is not the less low and defiled because it is consecrated by the lust of genius.

4. Given these principles and their applica-

[1] Helen S. Dyer, *The Ideal Christian Home*, 102.

tion, and where is society? Society should be its own constable. Society should protect itself. Every man should feel that he belongs to every other man, and that his experience is a common property, and his silence is blasphemy when wrong is being done or right is being injured. When people live in fear of each other it is generally when they are afraid to do right. It is amazing how much people are influenced by other people who would hardly acknowledge the range and energy of that influence in mere words. How many people say, We do not object to this ourselves, but what would the neighbours think of it? For our own part we think this is right, but we think it better not to do it on account of others. Here we have the right principle falsely applied. The consideration of others is the very principle of the text, but when the thing to be done is a right thing, and is not done for fear of others, then the right principle is driven to a wrong application, and by the very energy and divinity of the principle we must resist that form of putting it into activity. 'He's a slave who dare not be in the right with two or three.' There is a fear of society that is wholesome; there is a regard for others, as we have insisted, that is the expression of the very spirit of the text and of the very spirit of Christianity.[1]

¶ I received a letter from a very sagacious Scotch friend (belonging, as I suppose most Scotch people do, to the class of persons who call themselves 'religious'), containing this marvellous enunciation of moral principle, to be acted upon in difficult circumstances, 'Mind your own business.' It is a serviceable principle enough for men of the world, but a surprising one in the mouth of a person who professes to be a Bible obeyer. For, as far as I remember the tone of that obsolete book, 'our own' is precisely the last business which it ever tells us to mind. It tells us often to mind God's business, often to mind other people's business; our own, in any eager or earnest way, not at all.[2]

[1] Joseph Parker.

[2] Ruskin, *Letters on Public Affairs: The Italian Question*, § 1.

## Solidarity.

**Josh. xxii. 20.—'That man perished not alone in his iniquity.'**

That man was Achan. You remember the story. It is one of the most tragic in the early history of Israel. They had been defeated in a skirmish and they attributed it to the wrath of Jehovah. They believed, like the sailors in Jonah's story, that someone among them had been guilty of sacrilege or blasphemy, or some other moral or religious offence, and had aroused the slumbering hostility of God. Hence His fury had come down with terrible and undiscriminating sweep upon them all. And the only way to pacify Him was to find out the offender, and immolate him without mercy. They proceeded to draw lots with savage haste, and the lot fell upon Achan. It was found that he had secreted certain spoils which had fallen to him in the capture of Jericho. Joshua, fearing that these riches might corrupt and demoralize the people, had commanded every man to burn and destroy whatever came in his way, to retain nothing. This man, tempted by his cupidity, had violated the command. It was not enough to put the criminal himself to death—they brought out his sons and daughters, his oxen and sheep, and all his belongings, and stoned them with stones, and finished by consuming them with fire. And they experienced a great sense of relief in the thought that this huge sacrifice of innocent and guilty alike had satisfied the demands of their vindictive Deity.

It is almost blasphemy to say that God really did command them. The simple and honest way is to say that these men knew God's will only in part, and that their greatest prophets often erred most grossly in interpreting His voice. That applies to all the Old Testament's dark and vindictive pages. All that is pure, lofty, and Christlike there is of God—all that contradicts Christ is of man, begotten in those fogs of passion and prejudice which obscured the light and dimmed the vision of the most devout and inspired—and this applies emphatically to the immolation of Achan and his household

And yet what a profound and far-reaching truth Joshua gives us in these words: *'That man perished not alone in his iniquity.'* It was most unjust—it was a piece of heathen barbarity—to fasten the stigma of this one man's guilt upon those who had perhaps no share in it at all, no knowledge of it; to condemn the innocent children, and even the mute, unconscious sheep and cattle, and pile them up in one holocaust of fury and burning. Yet, were not these Israelites, in their fierce, blind way, illustrating a law which is at work continually and everywhere? Does not Nature, does not even Providence, seem to be sometimes as unjust and merciless as those grim children of the desert in riveting men, women, and children together in bands stronger than iron, so that when one falls they all fall, and the shame of one puts a brand-mark on all, and the sin of one brings suffering and penalty to all? This is one of the most tragic facts of human life, at first sight one of the most painful and inexplicable, most mysterious, and most unreasonable.

What man ever does perish alone in his iniquity? What plague-spot is there anywhere in a single life which does not infect a companion, a family, a community, or a nation? Who can offend without causing others to stumble? Who can daub his hands with pitch and not leave some of the marks of it on lives outside his own? What man can indulge in secret sins without having his iniquities visited on his children? What youth can run through his prodigal course without leaving stained and wrecked souls in his track, or hurrying some grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? What drunkard can take his short, swift road to delirium without involving others in miseries almost as great as his own? What man whose thoughts and actions are obscene and adulterous can speed his way to the damnation that awaits him without being followed by the tormenting ghosts of those whom he has polluted? Where is there a dishonest and lazy workman who does not make his industrious and honest companions suffer grievously for his indolence and neglect? Where an unscrupulous manufacturer sending out shoddied wool or papered boots who does not help to bring suspicion and distrust on all the confederates of his guilt? The sinner is never the only sufferer for his sins, though like David he may pray that all the penalty may fall on his own head, and ask what have these sheep done that the pestilence should come on them. Yet ever, in the secret ordering of things, the strokes which the guilty doer has provoked descend on other heads besides his own; and the most innocent are often made vicarious victims, carrying into the wilderness of life the scapegoat burden of iniquity not theirs—of sins in which their conscience had neither part nor lot.

Now, what does all this mean? Is there nothing but injustice in it? Is it a terrible law in which mercy has no place—a grim fact in which no Divine tenderness, no heavenly Father's face is visible, and no loving redeeming purpose to be discovered? Think not so. We are not left without clues to the solution of the mystery. It is one of those facts which are rough and cruel on the surface, like Joseph's speech to his brethren, but underneath is a hidden thought of tenderness and benevolence.

1. Does not this bring home to us the fact to which our Lord's ministry and death form one long pathetic emphasis—the fact of *the organic unity of the human race*, the fact of our inseparable brotherhood—that we are members one of another, and cannot dissolve the bond, however much we try? It is impossible for us to live our separate lives, and hedge them about in such a way that they shall not be affected by the sins and selfishness and miseries of the crowd at our doors. There is no evil in a city, but it indirectly touches us; no moral pestilence working there, but the foul breath of it floats over our own dwellings; no unrest and discontent there, but its fierce heart knocks wildly against our doors; no fevers and disease bred of sin, but the contagion of them is liable to catch hold of our unpolluted lives; no self-indulgence, and sloth and intemperance, and improvidence, but finds us out through many a secret channel, and requires of us some loss or sacrifice, or share in the imposed burden. If one member of the body suffer, all the mem-

bers are, more or less, affected thereby; the thrill of pain pierces through the whole community from foot to head. No man suffers alone in his iniquity; and it is well that it should be so. It is well that the imperial duties and claims of brotherhood should be thus forced upon us. If the pure and honest were always free from penalty, if the grim, sombre guilt of the horrid city slums never settled on the fair brows of the innocent and righteous, if every sinner stood alone in his sins, and no others were ever called upon to drink with him the bitter cup which he has mixed—then would the bonds of human brotherhood be relaxed and broken. Isolation instead of fraternity would become the law of life. The righteous would be tempted to hold himself aloof from his brother sinner; and that tender solicitude which all good men feel for the healing of sinners and the redemption of their fellows would perish in the stifling grasp of an unholy separation. It is this thought, that we are linked together for weal or woe—this thought, that while sin remains in the world we must all be more or less sufferers from it—that supplies one of the strongest incentives in the crusade against sin; that stimulates the flagging feet of duty, and helps to send forth all saints and earnest reformers to their compassionate work.

2. And then think how *it lays a strong restraining hand on men's wild passions.* When Joshua reminded the Israelites of Achan's tragedy, and pictured the children overwhelmed in the same dread penalty with the sire, was there a single father or mother in that crowd who did not revolt with horror and loathing from the sin which had been thus avenged? Would they not all resolve in that moment that, if not for their own sakes, then for their children's sakes, they would lay a curb upon their cupidity and licentious passions, and never more defile their hands with the accursed thing. There is no more powerful rein laid upon men's indulgent promptings and desires than the knowledge that the happiness or misery of others is involved in their doings, that the penalty which their sins invite will fall not only on their own heads, but on the wounded and bruised hearts of their children and best-beloved. It is a motive that appeals to the sweetest and dearest instincts, to the sentiments of fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood, friendship. There are a few men who care not what comes to others so long as they are allowed freely to indulge; to them the life-long martyrdom of wife and children, inflicted by their immoral doings, brings no compunction and no shame. But these are the monsters of the race, and they are the rare exceptions. To most men and women it is a matter that touches the deepest chords in their nature. To know that those dearest to us will be compelled to share the burdens and penalties of our guilt, that they will inherit our vices or participate to the full in the cup of our deserved shame, cannot fail to hedge us about with a panoply against temptation, and help to redeem our lives from baseness and impurity. It saves thousands of men from follies and crimes and immoralities from which nothing else would deter them. And there is, perhaps, no law in the whole realm of God's providence which acts on the whole more beneficently, and does more to sustain the moral life of families, communities, and nations.

¶ We regret that we cannot alter the past. Of course we cannot; we cannot alter what is not. We should regret with shame that we have not yet realised our incalculable powers of shaping the future. And since individual man is mortal, future man, of whom the unthinkable myriads are at this hour latent in the living germ-plasm now borne by us who are now alive—*future man is in our keeping. This present germ-plasm is the human race to come*, and it is absolutely at our mercy. . . . Thus one may contract a disease which infects the germ, breeding horrors of every kind. Or one may suffer from lead-poisoning and similarly poison, temporarily or otherwise, the germ-plasm—with corresponding consequences. Or, if one takes alcohol in sufficient quantities, and under certain conditions, the same result will ensue. In such cases, those elements of the germ-cells which are destined to give rise to the nervous system, and especially the highest part of the brain of the future individual, are most seriously injured, in accord-

ance with the general rule that the most highly evolved structure is the most delicate and susceptible. The parent who so treats his trust thus attacks, often to destruction, the highest attributes of man—the very characters which make him human. And the father who thus bestows a germ-cell which he has infected with syphilis leaves nothing undone to make his act the most utter and complete abomination that can be named.[1]

[1] C. W. Saleeby, *Health, Strength and Happiness*, 408f.

# FIGHTING.

Josh. xxiii. 3.—'The Lord your God is he that hath fought for you.'
Jg. vii. 20.—'The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.'
1 Ch. xii. 8.—'Men of war fit for the battle.'
2 Ch. xx. 15.—'The battle is not yours, but God's.'
Ps. xlvi. 9.—'He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.'
Ps. cxliv. 1.—'Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.'
Jer. i. 22.—'A sound of battle is in the land.'
Ac. v. 39.—'Lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.'
1 Co. ix 26.—'So fight I, not as one that beateth the air.'
1 Co. xvi. 13.—'Quit you like men, be strong.'
Rev. xii. 7.—'There was war in heaven.'
Rev. xvii. 14.—'These shall make war with the Lamb.'

The Bible is a book of wars, from Cain's fight with Abel to the fight of Michael and his angels against the Dragon. St. Paul sees the Christian as the armed soldier, and our God Himself is 'He that hath fought for' us. It is true that life is necessarily a conflict, for we have to make our way in one direction through a medley of forces that are coming from a dozen directions, and this we can do only by a continual struggle that may well be imaged to our consciousness in terms of battle, defeat and victory.

Let us see, then, what we can find about the battlefield, the battle, and the fighters.

## I.

## THE BATTLEFIELD.

Fighting is generally thought of as something outside a man. Often it is, but, like another virtue, it begins at home. No man's external fighting is likely to be much good to himself or anyone else—certainly not to God—unless he is a good fighter with his own self. So there is a double battlefield.

1. *The fight within ourselves.*—Listen to what the Apostle says: 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.' The Apostle, let us say, likens the human heart to little earthen jars, filled with clear water, set in the sun; and the whole glorious circle of the sun shines out of darkness into these vessels of clay, and sparkles in the clear liquid they contain. Then he goes on: 'We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.' The reason is that the disturbing, afflicting element is *outside*; and so long as it is outside, it may trouble, but cannot distress; may perplex, but not make to despair; may persecute, but not cause to be forsaken by the glorious light; may cast down, but not destroy. Let the disturbing element, however, be found *within*, then the condition is changed. If once there be war in that heaven, a rebellion of the will against the will of God, a revolt of the human intellect against the revelation of God, a rising of carnal passions against the law of God—then the Sabbath of the soul is gone, its peace is broken, its brightness overcast.

Yet in this fight within we are not alone. God is fighting in us; not for us merely, but

*in* us. Every moral progress that we make in this world is God's progress. Every moral victory that we win in this world is God's victory. For instance, when, for some immediate advantage and gain, or for some momentary relief or easement in an embarrassing situation, we are tempted to tell or to act a lie, and yet resist the temptation and do not lie, it is the God in us that does not lie—it is God's victory in us. When we are tempted to say a harsh and stinging word, to utter some unkind and uncharitable speech, with a little bit of venom and spitefulness in it, in regard to some neighbour or friend, and resist the temptation and do not do it, it is the God in us that does not do it—it is God's victory in us. So throughout the whole range of moral action, work, behaviour, character and conduct, there is the manifestation of God.

(1) The higher and the lower war in us: the physical instincts which we share with the animals are right and natural in their proper place, but when they try to usurp the guidance that should belong to those higher powers that we have as sons of God, then there is war. 'Fleshly lusts war against the soul.' Lust is inordinate desire—the desire for too much of a good thing, or for any of a bad one. Fleshly lusts are those which seek their gratification through the avenues of the physical nature with which God has endowed us. We are all provided with certain natural instincts and desires, which have been implanted for right and useful purposes, and are innocent and right when regulated by the will of God. But these natural appetites are constantly fretting against restraint, yearning for unlawful gratification, seething and foaming as the seawaves against a harbour bar. If we yield to them; if we love anything outside the circle of God's will; if we follow our own wild instincts, irrespective of the self-restraint demanded by conscience; if we indulge any one side of our nature out of the due balance and equilibrium of the whole; if we allow an undue monopoly of taste or thought in one direction —then beware!

¶ Every man must learn for himself where his own danger lies, and then must resolve, at whatever cost, to escape it. Our choice lies between yielding to the degrading bondage which has made us despise ourselves, and a life inspired with the Holy Ghost—a life of strength, joy, and blessedness. It is of no use to try to pray, unless we 'abstain' from that which makes prayer dull and heartless, and renders us incapable of receiving the very blessings we ask for. It is of no use to try to meditate on the majesty and goodness of God, unless we 'abstain' from that which almost incapacitates us for lofty meditation, and which, if for a moment we are swept upwards among the harps and songs of angels, sinks us down at once into our earthly dust again. For some men to rise to a nobler life it may be quite as necessary to eat less as to pray more; to spend less time over their wine as to spend more time over their Bible; to ride, to walk, to run, to bathe, as to engage in regular and earnest Christian work.[1]

(2) We war also against our own weakness, which seeks to drag down our strength. We are such poor things, measured against what we want to be, that it seems hopeless to try to be any better. It is hard in cold blood to believe that there is any good thing in us, that there is anything which destiny counts in that eternal order which God controls. We know the weakness that saps every attempt to be strong. We feel how much our apparent strength depends upon favourable circumtances, how presumptuous is the lazy self-confidence which flourishes in the absence of sudden or overpowering temptation. And yet it is well that our lazy belief in ourselves should be thus accused. It needs this accusation to sting it into vigorous life, to remind it that it has to fight for its life, that it is a belief into which we must enter through much anguish and tribulation. The accuser has a part in our redemption. If his challenge did not ring out fierce, insistent, inexorable, we should lie for ever in the torpid drowse of self-satisfaction or despairing indifference which is death. It is the conflict that keeps us spiritually alive, that dread incessant conflict between the hope that will arise in man that he is worth some-

[1] R. W. Dale, in *The Churchman's Pulpit*, pt. 14, p. 109.

thing to God and the hard, stern verdict of a present reality that he is unworthy of God's service or of God's reward.

When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
Never leave growing till the life to come![1]

(3) What, throughout, is the cause of this war? It is the same in each—the opposition, through wrong desire, through indifference, or through weariness, of the free will to the will of God. It was because the angels willed not as God willed that they were cast out of heaven. It is because, in the Church, the stubborn wills of men cannot endure that God's action should be spiritual only, but wish to assist it with carnal weapons, that schism breaks out. It is because, in the household, all the members do not conform their wills to the Divine law that strife is generated. In the human soul it is the same; the human will rises up and fights against the will of God, it will not freely bend and obey, and thence comes all its desolation, humiliation, and anguish. There is no peace to be found anywhere, till everything that offends be cast out, till everything that exalts itself be humbled, till every free intelligence has learned by suffering to bow before the Divine will.

2. *The fight in the external world.*—In practice we find that this battlefield is threefold.

(1) There is fighting *on the material plane* —the fighting of a regiment charging an enemy trench. Some people say that such fighting is invariably wrong. It is true that the Christian was told that if he were smitten on one cheek he was to turn the other also. But this was a direction to individuals in their relation to individuals. They were not to resist, they were not to retaliate, they were willingly to suffer wrong; and the more closely they followed this rule, the better Christians they would be. Wars, however, have relation not to the individual but to society. Armies are the world's police. Where in the New Testament do you find that the magistracy of nations is dissolved? The rulers of a country are ordained of God for the protection of society. They have to repress crime. Brutality, cruelty, foul offences against social order must be forcibly restrained. Even the liberty of the individual must sometimes be sacrificed. And as it belongs to the magistracy of the nation by force to repress crime within the nation itself, so it belongs to it by force of arms to restrain the lawlessness of other nations in the invasion of its soil, the pillage of its property, the overthrow of its freedom, or the attempt to arrest its progress on the path of civilization.

The war that we can justify to God is one in which the magistracy are protecting the interests committed to their care, and preserving the moral order of the world. When, too, we speak of the teaching of Christ, we must not forget that, according to His teaching, though human life be a thing sacred and precious, yet there are things more precious even than that. 'He that will save his life shall lose it.' There are situations when this maxim of His has come home to the missionary, the soldier, the servant of science in contest with some natural danger. If the thing he has to do is the thing to which he has been called, he is to do it at all hazards. The thought of losing his life is not to be suffered to come in his way. Like the doctor or the pastor by the fever-stricken bed, he feels that he is there by God's will, and that his life is in God's hand. The same principle applies to all. A man who loves his country should be willing to die for it, if the terrible necessity should come. That is as much Christ's teaching as the other. He is the Prince of Peace, but this peace will come, not by leaving the world to anarchy and ruin, but by the firm restraint of evil and the growth of brotherhood among men.

¶ The conquests of Alexander spread the Greek civilization through East and West.

[1] Browning, *Bishop Blougram's Apology.*

Had it not been for Charles Martel's stand against the Saracens at Tours we might to-day, as Gibbon puts it, have Mohammedan doctors teaching their creed at Oxford. Drake's fight against the Armada saved England from the Spaniard and the Pope. It was fighting that gave the Dutch Republic its liberty and being; that secured Italy its unity and freedom; that at Trafalgar and Waterloo broke the despotism of Napoleon. The world's liberties, so far, have been cemented with blood.[1]

(2) There is the fight *on the intellectual plane*—the battle for truth. This is a fight not only by reason of the absolute difficulty of finding truth in itself, but by reason of the powers—literal 'powers of darkness'—that add further difficulty. The good fight of faith is impossible when authority steps in and bids a man meekly accept a faith it has formulated for him. The faith for which he must fight is his faith and not someone else's. We are not mercenary troops bribed to fight for a cause we do not care for; we are not serfs in a spiritual feudalism compelled to fight for the faith because we cannot refuse. The bribe that is offered us is mental rest, peace of mind. We dare not take it at the price. The price is surrender of our manhood, our faculty of thought, our liberty of conscience. They will tell us that from youth to age we shall be tortured with fear, misgiving, doubt, and perplexity. They will tell us that life will be a perpetual conflict. They will offer to take us out of the strife: to give us the wreath without the contest; the victory without the battle. There may be people who care for prizes they have never won and rewards they have never deserved; but it is the man who comes with the stains of the fight upon him, swarthy, and scarred, and breathless, with the fire of conquest in his eyes, and the smile of triumph on his lips, whose heart will thrill with pride as he receives the cross of honour.

¶ I believe there are those who wish Paul had spoken the last word as well as the first as to the interpretation of Christian truth. I believe they would have wished every department of truth to have closed its doors at the end of the first century—careful inventories to have been made as to what was known, and the human search after truth to have been proclaimed at an end. I believe they would be happier if the extent of our knowledge to-day were not as large as it is. I believe they are secretly irritated when new, and apparently awkward, facts are brought to light, and I know that very often they refuse to think or read about them lest they should get what they call 'unsettled in the faith.' Do you know what that means? It means a lurking suspicion that old formulas might have to be altered, and *they are not sure enough about the facts to be indifferent about the formulæ.* What a conception they must have of Christ and religion who think that truth of any kind could *unsettle* anyone! What a poor opinion they must have of their own faith if they think it is in danger from fresh discoveries of truth! I rejoice that there is work for *you* to do. I rejoice that St. Paul could not—living when he did—bear the burden of your day as well as his. I rejoice in every new aspect of life and thought that will send you back to examine the foundation of our faith, for it will be only by such searching mental and spiritual experiences that you will learn to know the truth as it is in Jesus.[1]

(3) Finally, there is the fight *on the spiritual plane.* Everywhere, all over the world, God's war is going on. For everywhere, all over the world, we see moral life; not very much, it may be, not very strong, and yet we see it in all no matter how degraded, sunken, fallen, low; and we see it fighting in all. For there is no man, however bad, who does not try sometimes to be good and to do right. And that moral life which we everywhere see is God's life, and that moral fight which is everywhere going on is God's fight. Everywhere, all over the earth, God's war is going on.

When we engage in that conflict, what is it that we do? We are not simply responding to the appeal of man—we are responding rather to the appeal of God in man. The man perhaps does not make any appeal, does not ask

[1] J. Brierley, *The Secret of Living*, 265.

[1] C. S. Horne, in *Sermons and Addresses*, 91.

our assistance, does not want our assistance, does not send a message to us and say in so many words, Come over and help me; but God is saying in the man, Come and help *Me*. And the less the man himself appeals, the more does God in the man appeal and ask our help. We seem to hear His voice speaking to us and saying, The passions of this man are so fierce and strong, his ignorances and his weaknesses are so many and great, that I am shut up as in a prison. Come help Me to open wide and break in sunder these prison doors, that I may become victorious in him.

¶ It would seem that war is a feature not of our depraved mortal condition only: Heaven also, the high and holy place, has felt the shock of war, the din and heat and violence, the spites and pains, the despairs and triumphs and revenges. War is not the disgraceful accident of some inferior districts of the universe. No, there is fighting at the sacred centre, at almost the very fount and source of things. Good proves the strong power, but only by fighting hard. Evil is driven out, but only by being beaten on a stricken field. Good wins: yes, but only because it has its champions, and those champions are brave, and will give good blows and take them.[1]

Sorrow of saints is sorrow of a day,
Gladness of saints is gladness evermore:
Send on thy hope, send on thy will before,
To chant God's praise along the narrow way.
Stir up His praises if the flesh would sway,
Exalt His praises if the world press sore,
Peal out His praises if black Satan roar
A hundred thousand lies to say them nay.
Devil and Death and Hades, threefold cord
Not quickly broken, front thee to thy face;
Front thou them with a face of tenfold flint:
Shout for the battle, David! never stint
Body or breath or blood, but proof in grace,
Die for thy Lord, as once for thee thy Lord.[2]

[1] J. H. Skrine, *Saints and Worthies*, 70.
[2] Christina G. Rossetti.

## II.

## The Battle.

Christianity is a religion of peace and love, and it has therefore been said to preclude fighting. But as a matter of fact the whole world is continually fighting, Christians included, and the Christians have the toughest fight of anybody, and the most important; and just in so far as they 'turn back in the day of battle' they are unworthy followers of their Captain. It is true that the fight is against 'spiritual wickedness,' but sometimes, as our generation has good reason to know, the spiritual wickedness becomes as it were incarnate in 'principalities and powers,' and the fight becomes material and intellectual as well as spiritual—*because* it is spiritual. It is always these spiritual issues that count. The others are only their outer manifestation: the fight whose issues are only material or even only intellectual is one with which the Christian as such has assuredly nothing to do.

But where any spiritual issue is at stake, where deliberate wrong is arrayed against the rights of men, where fraud is practised on the unprotected, where hypocrisy imposes on the credulous, where vice betrays the innocent, where inefficiency sacrifices precious human interests, where avarice oppresses the poor, where tyranny tramples on the weak, there the man who shares the Father's love for His maltreated children, the man who walks daily in the companionship of the Christ who owns all the downtrodden as His brothers, will be the most fearless and uncompromising foe of every form of injustice and oppression. Property, reputation, position, time, strength, influence, health, life itself if need be, will be thrown unreservedly into the fight against vice and sin. He cannot company with the Father and with Christ and not come out in opposition to everything that wrongs and injures the humblest man, the lowliest woman, the most defenceless little child.

¶ A suggestive artist has given us a picture of the battle-field some time after the Battle of Waterloo. In it, all strife and passion have passed away, and there, in the midst

of the field, he has painted a lamb quietly resting in the mouth of an old, disused cannon. It is a parable of what will be—not of what is; of what will be after the battle of life has ended, not of what is while it is being waged. Our Waterloo is not yet over: no lamb yet sleeps in the cannon's mouth. The field *now* is, and is meant to be, 'with confused noise and garments rolled in blood.' 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution' of some kind or another. There are no exceptions. But Waterloo won't last for ever.[1]

1. *Unless we fight we are not fully alive.*—Fighting is instinctive in human nature—indeed in almost all animate nature. There is sometimes in the operation of this instinct a 'joy' or 'elation' which is quite independent of the satisfaction of the impulse, so far as that consists in the destruction of an enemy, and which cannot be considered to arise from anger at all. For some natures merely to fight is 'to drink delight of battle,' the delight being in the struggle itself, not in its successful issue. This is the kind of fighting instinct which has characterized the great warriors of all ages. In other spheres of action it has also characterized the great sailors, explorers, even reformers. It is *par excellence* the characteristic of a warlike race, and, because of this, the warlike races are nearly always capable, on occasion, of the highest chivalry, for, when they fight, they are inspired by the joy of battle, not by hate of the enemy. This phenomenon is to be found in all vital, dynamic natures, for, reduced to its essence, it is the sheer joy of overcoming difficulty. Now there is nothing wrong in that. It all depends on how, why, and where it is exercised.

All the moral and spiritual progress, and all the mental progress, that men have reached in this world, they have reached through warfare, and that conflict always has been and is now the condition, the inexorable condition, of growth. Man might have been made to grow in wisdom and in goodness without conflict, or he might have been made in these respects full-grown at the outset—wholly wise and wholly good, and we wonder sometimes why he was not; but he was not, and he has had to struggle and to fight every inch of his way. Browning, you remember, describes his status thus—

Lower than God who knows all and can all,
Higher than beasts which know and can so far
As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,
Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;
While man knows partly but conceives beside,
Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
And in this striving, this converting air
Into a solid he may grasp and use,
Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's, and not the beasts'; God is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.

2. *But we must fight in the right cause.*—There are two kinds of fighting—lawful and unlawful. To fight our own battles, and occasionally a few for our neighbours, comes all too naturally. Fighting God's battles on principle is a very different thing. To the Christian there is no warrant for aggressive war—no, not under any circumstances whatsoever; but there may be a war which, being purely defensive, is therefore not only lawful, but most holy.

Yet when we say, speaking generally, that this can apply only to the case of defensive war, even *that* needs explanation. 'Defensive.' Yes; but in defence of what? Not anything and everything upon which we choose to set some specific value. Not every ideal, of self-interest or of greatness, upon which a perverted imagination has been fed. Not any single thing—whether material or spiritual—the maintenance or preservation of which, for ourselves, can by any possibility mean wanton, undeserved injury or wrong to any other. These are not of the things for which the Law of Christ permits and requires that a Christian should fight. And what, then, are such things?

If we love good we must fight against evil of all kinds—mental, moral, and material. If we love evil we will necessarily war against good, for evil is the negation of good and if

[1] E. E. Holmes, *The Days of the Week*, 58.

it did not war against it would cease to exist. All who love must expect to be hated by the foes of those whom they love. Because Jesus loved the common people and sought to deliver them from their fears and errors, the men who traded on those fears and errors put Him to an ignominious death. If we love and serve the despised, the abused, the plundered, those who despise and abuse and plunder them will do to us the worst they dare. Fighting is then lawful, and, more than lawful, is *holy*. When an enlightened, scrupulous, and tender Christian conscience has told us that the summons, the 'call,' of God Himself is in it, that no possible way or alternative lies open short of dishonour and reproach, we are bound to fight. That is a safe general rule, even under New Testament guidance, and in obedience to the teaching and the spirit of Christ.

¶ Clough, thinking of the crushing of the earlier Italian attempts to overthrow the brutal Austrian domination in Lombardy, says it was

> Not in vain, although in vain,
> O men of Brescia, on the day
> Of loss past hope, I heard you say
> Your welcome to the noble pain.
>
> You said, 'Since so it is,—good bye
> Sweet life, high hope; but whatsoe'er
> May be, or must, no tongue shall dare
> To tell, "The Lombard feared to die!" '
>
> You said, (there shall be answer fit,)
> 'And if our children must obey,
> They must; but thinking on this day
> 'T will less debase them to submit.'
>
> You said, (Oh not in vain you said,)
> 'Haste, brothers, haste, while yet we may;
> The hours ebb fast of this one day
> When blood may yet be nobly shed.'
>
> Ah! not for idle hatred, not
> For honour, fame, nor self-applause,
> But for the glory of the cause,
> You did, what will not be forgot.
>
> And though the stranger stand, 'tis true,
> By force and fortune's right he stands;
> By fortune, which is in God's hands,
> And strength, which yet shall spring in you.
>
> This voice did on my spirit fall,
> Peschiera, when thy bridge I crost,
> ' 'Tis better to have fought and lost,
> Than never to have fought at all.' [1]

3. *And we must fight for peace.*—This point has so much interest to our generation that it demands a separate consideration. We have just seen a world at war, and even now it is very incompletely pacified. Dissensions, quarrels, contendings, and even wars are not likely soon to cease. And, as a matter of fact, no one will venture to argue—even after these thousands of years of wrong—that we are yet within sight of the time when all quarrels (international, national, domestic, or social) shall be at an end, when the law-courts shall be abolished, and when they shall 'learn war' no more. Yet force is not the supreme law of Christ's kingdom, and material war—war on the physical plane—is contrary to the spirit of His rule. The testimony of His warriors, the inscription on their banner, will always be 'The love of Christ constraineth,' not 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.' But so far war has been necessary, may even be necessary again.

Yet necessary as it may have been hitherto, it is only because it has been the lesser of two evils, one of which men's sins had made inevitable. All war is a filthy business. Mr. R. J. Campbell, writing from the Front, says: 'I utterly and entirely dissent from the view that there is something essentially uplifting in war as war. Every normal human being must dread, loathe, and detest war, for if it reveals some things that savour of heaven it reveals more that reek of hell. See what the glorification of war has done for Germany. I have not the slightest hesitation in admitting that as a people the Germans are intellectually better trained and more efficient than we, their resources better organized and developed, their manhood better disciplined and equipped for the business of life in its material aspects. But look at the temper of mind that goes with it—hard, arrogant, domineering, unable to appreciate the rights of others or even to understand others' point of view. It has given Germany the most unscrupulous government of

[1] A. H. Clough.

modern times; for as sure as you get a nation mastered by the monster of militarism, a nation in which everything else in administration is subordinated to militaristic ideals, you get a Government without sentiment, without humanity, without respect for the ordinary obligations of truth and honour.'[1]

If we want to fight for God we have to fight war. We are not expected to fall upon the neck of every person we meet, or to proclaim ourselves bosom friends at the first sight of every acquaintance. We are not asked to believe that we have no enemies. But we can repress hostile feelings by definite goodwill. Unless we have utterly given place to the devil, we must wish everyone well, even when they have done us wrong; for repentance can come to those who have injured us only when they have become better persons. This goodwill, as a persistent orientation of soul, is a creative sentiment, and it means sweetening our own hearts as well as sweetening others. We who want to end war need to ask ourselves whether in our personal relationships we act as a unifying or disintegrating force; whether we have the effect of making friends or multiplying enemies. We ought to be concerned about any misunderstanding, rupture of intimacy, or drift towards hostility as a thing at all costs to be avoided, because it cuts us off from that mediated communion with God which is the foundation of all health of soul.

Before the face of God we swear:
As life is good and sweet,
Under the sun
This horror shall not come again;
Never, never again
Shall twenty million men,
Nor twenty, no, nor ten,
Leave all God gave them in the hands of one—
Leave the decision over peace and war
To king or kaiser, president or tsar.

4. *We must go on fighting when we have won peace.*—This sounds a little paradoxical, but it is not. We are to stop war between nations: but we can never stop fighting.

Mr. Lecky, in his *History of European Morals,* says: 'That which invests war, in spite of all the evils that attend it, with a certain moral grandeur, is the heroic self-sacrifice it elicits. With perhaps the single exception of the Church, it is the sphere in which mercenary motives have least sway, in which performance is least weighed and measured by strict obligation, in which a disinterested enthusiasm has most scope. A battlefield is the scene of deeds of self-sacrifice so transcendent, and at the same time so dramatic, that, in spite of all its horrors and crimes, it awakens the most passionate moral enthusiasm.' Is there no other way of arousing this moral enthusiasm, no other way of evoking to the same degree the spirit of self-sacrifice? Yes, if civilization as a whole could rise to the moral level requisite for it. Professor William James of Harvard used to maintain that one great thing which modern civilization had yet to do was to find a moral substitute for war, an incentive to action that would bring out the grandest qualities of human nature without the accompaniment of slaughter and the suffering and anguish that follow in its train.

We want a trained and disciplined people; a muscular, full-blooded, and courageous people; a people that can use its weapons and aim straight. But—and here the whole question comes—are the only weapons guns and bayonets? When we are taught to aim straight, shall the only target be the bodies of our fellow-men? Are not the mattock and plough as good for human handling as sword and gun? Aim skilfully with them at Mother Earth, and the results, in turning wildernesses into fruitful fields, are surely as good as the maiming of limbs and the beating out of brains! Does not Nature offer us a field for all our courage and all our skill? To tunnel her mountains, drain her swamps, combat her diseases, explore her unknown territories; to become masters of her sea and land, of her heights above and depths beneath; to wring from her those jealously guarded secrets which, once disclosed, will make man into superman—is there not enough in this warfare to call out all the strength and daring there is in us?

[1] *The War and the Soul,* 65, 66.

Instead of the conscripts of slaughter let us have the conscripts of industry, the conscripts of human development. The militarists are right in demanding national organization, a training system which lets no individual escape. But let us have the right training and for the right objects. In previous ages man has been marvellously industrious and marvellously brave in the business of making his brother man miserable. We want now all that industry and all that courage in making him happy. After his ages of madness let him begin his period of sanity. After placing his valour, his civilization, his religion so long at the devil's service, let him, for a change, place them at his own.

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.[1]

## III.

## The Fighters.

The leader in the battle is God: but man fights sometimes alongside and sometimes against Him.

### i.

### *The Warrior God.*

'The Lord of Hosts'—the Lord of Sabaoth, as we know it familiarly in our *Te Deum*—is a title with which we are well acquainted throughout the whole Bible. It is the war-cry of the Books of Kings, and is stamped on the utterances of Isaiah and the Prophets; in its Hebrew form it finds its way into the New Testament in the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle of St. Jude. It would seem to represent the idea of a great King marching to war, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in Him, to whom all things in heaven and in earth and under the earth do bow, and whom they obey.

[1] William Blake.

1. *The Lord of Hosts is God the Father.*—We see the creating Father as the Warrior in such visions as were vouchsafed, for instance, to Micaiah, the prophet, in the Book of Kings, where the Lord is seen by His servant sitting on His throne. At His right hand and at His left stand all the hosts of heaven, from whom go forth ministers of wrath and judgment into the world, and kings move where they are impelled, and the arrow shot at a venture is guided by an unknown hand to be the weapon of destiny. The prophet Isaiah also sees God in His Majesty adored by veiled seraphs, enthroned in glory and magnified in mystery by the trembling and hiding of all created things. The inspired Evangelists gazes into heaven, where angels pass and repass on missions of love or on messages of wrath, where the vials of God's vengeance are stored with judgment, and blessings flow forth from His hand, where Churches are upheld or are removed, where nations and kings are judged, and all the busy life of the world is 'bound by gold chains about the feet of God.' 'The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee'; 'For I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.'

2. *The Lord of Hosts is God the Son.*—The Incarnate Son too is Captain of the hosts of the Lord as well as Prince of Peace. So, more than a thousand years ago, the old Northumbrian poet Cynewulf thought of Him in his *Dream of the Rood.* He speaks of Christ as 'the young hero, strong and steadfast-hearted.'

(1) Christ's life on earth as Jesus was one long fight: the life of Jesus exhibits Him a prey to hypocrisy and malice, to dark intrigues and covetous compacts, to barefaced lies and calumnious accusations, to the pretended indignation of self-seeking patriots. Satan, who tempted Jesus with bribes in the wilderness, with fears in Gethsemane, with death-alarms and horrors upon the Cross, had his allies in Peter, the forward and earthly-tempered friend; in the nationalist party, of Pharisees and Herodians; in Judas, the betrayer; in the fickle mob and the wicked rulers. He tempted and he slandered. He tempted, that he

might have wherewith to accuse. Foiled in this, he invented accusations. Hence the simple-hearted Prophet, who 'came not to destroy, but to fulfil Law and Prophets,' was accused to the High Priest, as One who had declared He would overthrow the Temple; and He who had resisted the people's wish to make Him a king was handed over to the secular arm, to Pilate and the Roman government, as a rival and a plotter against Cæsar. Insidious temptations and unscrupulous falsehoods, dressed up as truth, are the arts in which Satan excels. He tried them against Jesus, and was entirely baffled.

(2) Christ fought too after this human life was over, and fights still. The core of John's revelation is 'the Lamb making war with the beast.' This warfare and its issues constitute the underlying unity of the whole book. The beast is the beast—the basal element in human life—the struggle with which and the conquest of which make an angelic life possible. The conquest of the beast by the Lamb is the meaning of all history in its larger aspect and of all individual biography. The interest which attaches to every piece of biographical literature arises from the fact that it shows how the battle went in some particular case. The Book of Revelation is, for this reason, in some grand sense a summary of all human history, as it is also a typical picture of all personal struggle. It is a terrific warfare, but only pessimism says that its issue is doubtful.

¶ The battle is often pictured as a war between the Lamb and the beast. The beast may be taken to denote the rebellion of the animal, the untamed, the sensual, the violent element, blatant and blasphemous. But what makes the beast as distinguished from the man is that there is no direct correspondence of the animal with God, and there never can be. What we have to consider in our day is that the beast may be tamed, and remain the beast. You may carry out social reform, give every one decent conditions of living, suppress to a great degree drunkenness and immorality, silence the scoffer, and yet be further from your goal than ever. A contented materialism is as far from God as the most rebellious infidelity, and may even be harder for the Christian preacher to deal with.[1]

3. *The Lord of Hosts is God the Spirit.*—The Holy Ghost—God outgoing through mankind—fights continually. As the cause of Christ goes forward, it creates ever intenser antipathy. The progress of His coronation provokes all the baser elements in the world and out of it, and they gather themselves together for one supreme effort. Thus good and evil will go on developing, as Professor Denney in his Commentary on Thessalonians points out, the good getting better, and the bad growing worse, till they meet in one last decisive conflict. It is well for us to realize this. It saves us from dejection and disappointment. The beast in humanity is constantly shaking himself loose and rising up when we thought he had been killed. Nothing is more surprising than this sudden recrudescence of old evils and sins, and nothing is more disheartening. We are inclined sometimes to lose hope of the final victory of good. But let us remember that both wheat and tares are to grow together till the harvest.

¶ National morality moves slowly. It can only move in so far as individual Christians have practised and proved the methods of the Lamb, and infused His spirit into the national life. . . . Daily we must humble ourselves, control ourselves, purify ourselves of lust and greed, so that in our family, social, or political life we may be counted worthy gradually to supplant the weapons of Elijah by the weapons of the Lamb.[2]

4. *The hosts of the Lord are manifold.*

(1) There is, first, the great army of indirect agents that God uses in the service of man, which are all marshalled under the banner of the Lord of Hosts. History, ancient and modern, is full of the wonders done by that which we call 'chance,' but which is really the hidden action of God, and His unexplained interference through His creatures. Light, heat, and electricity; attraction, gravitation; fire and hail; snow and vapours; stormy winds

[1] W. R. Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, 135.
[2] H. Johnson, in *The Interpreter*, vol. 12, p. 344.

fulfilling His word; suns and moons and stars of light—all are the agents and ministers of God.

¶ Napoleon is hurled out of Russia by fire and frost, just as Titus, centuries before him, found himself powerless to save the doomed temple at Jerusalem by reason of mysterious agencies which fought against him. Here it is a little child who seems to be the absolutely inadequate means of arresting the suicide. Here the writer of experiences in a gaol says, 'One of the worst women we ever had in gaol we caught one day weeping over a daisy.' This was God's indirect agent of appeal to her. Here a chance wound, as it seemed, turns the whole career of St. Ignatius; here a chance Gospel which he heard in church is the crisis in the life of St. Francis. Here a chance meeting with a friend, or the sagacity of a horse or dog, or even a book which has turned aside a bullet, has shown the agencies for our protection which God uses all around us; but we congratulate ourselves and call it good luck:—

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.[1]

(2) But these involuntary forces play only the minor part—indeed they might more properly be called munitions than armies. The real army of the Lord is a volunteer one. He knows as well as any earthly commander that 'one volunteer is worth three pressed men,' and all His army are free to fight or to refuse to fight. But if they refuse it is at their peril, just as the man who refuses to volunteer against an invasion refuses at his peril. God cannot get His will done in Heaven without fighting angels, nor His will done in earth as in heaven without men who will fight.

God's army moves forward under the conquering banner of the Lord of Hosts; He appeals to us now to come to His side, as He rides forth conquering and to conquer. It will be to our shame and confusion if the recording angel publishes abroad the indictment of our cowardice, and the sentence of our sloth—'Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.'

¶ Try to follow the Christ a very little way, and illustrations of this inevitableness of war will occur to you. Someone or other will soon be offended with you only because you act as a Christian must: someone will be annoyed with you because you will not fall in with his dubious practices, will not be as lazy or dishonest or easy about moral evil as would be convenient for his own way of life: someone will think your conscientiousness may spoil his own selfish little game and interfere with unfair privileges of his: someone will object to you because you do your duty as an authority or because you express your opinion as an equal: someone will hate you for trying to live a good life, because good is good and evil is evil, and evil cannot but hate good. Then there will be war. There is no help for it, except the help which lies in facing the fact betimes and meeting it with a mind prepared. There was war in heaven: then war there must be on earth. God cannot spare His fighting angel Michael, and He cannot spare you, whoever of you has the heart to fight in the quarrel of God.[1]

[1] W. C. E. Newbolt, *The Cardinal Virtues*, 196.

ii.

*'Men of war fit for the battle.'*

We are bound, if we have any life in us, to fight in God's constant battle. But we fight as volunteers: we are free to choose our side.

1. *We may fight against God.*—This recalls Gamaliel's famous warning to the Sanhedrin: 'Lest haply ye be found even to fight against God'—a warning that fully bears out his traditional wisdom. 'It was a good thought,' says Matthew Henry, commenting on this dictum. Moreover it is a Scriptural thought. Gamaliel gathered his counsel from the best book of counsel. King Abijah cried, 'Fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.' Eliphaz cried concerning the wicked man: 'He stretch-

[1] J. H. Skrine, *Saints and Worthies*, 71.

eth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers.' Isaiah uttered the same strange cry: 'Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker.'

The possibility which Gamaliel entertains is recognized throughout the Book of Life. '*Lest* haply ye be found even to fight against God.' We must mark that 'lest.' It is a possibility. It would seem impossible. The idea of fighting against God might well make us shudder. The very possibility of our doing this should drive us to vigilant and perpetual prayer. Nor can we afford to slur that 'ye.' They were religious people who were alluded to. Many of them were religious leaders. Is it possible for such to be found fighting against God? Yes: they have often done it. The army of the Lord has rebelled against its King. Let us consider the ways in which 'haply' we 'may be found even to fight against God.' Let us see if Gamaliel's message is not seasonable still.

(1) We may fight against God *through ignorance,* claiming all the time to be fighting on His side. This has happened many times to sincerely good people. Look at the fearful suffering and bloodshed which marked the Reformation, when human passion burned at its fiercest under both the priestly robe and the Geneva gown. Or come to other periods, and recall how the Church, shutting her eyes blindly to the truth which God was teaching men, resisted the discoveries of science from the days of Galileo till modern times. We smile now as we think of the dismay and the bitterness when geology overthrew hitherto accepted traditions respecting the age of the earth and the interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis. Even the use of chloroform was denounced in the name of religion. We may say these people cannot be blamed, if they acted in good faith; they knew no better. Yes, but could they not have known better if they had liked? Did they not say, in effect, 'We believe so and so to be true—if you produce facts which contradict any of our beliefs we are not going to listen to you. We are so sure you are wrong that we can condemn you without trial.' How foolish is all such passion! As if any proved fact can be a peril to Divine truth. As if God were not the Father of lights, from whom every light given to man must come. To make war against the new revelation of truth is to fight against the Holy Ghost. This, in honest, helpless ignorance, will surely be forgiven, though it suffers a heavy penalty. But what of *wilful* ignorance—what of those of whom it is said (and they were very pious people), 'For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart'? Fighting against God, they lose.

¶ There are probably few religious people now who really think that Christianity is in danger because most of us have given up believing that the world was made in six days, or that God literally walked in a geographical garden of Eden. So rapidly, indeed, has theology up to a certain point adapted itself to the scientific view of the universe and the critical view of the Old Testament Scriptures, that we are tempted to forget how short a time it is since the literal acceptance of every historical and scientific statement in the Old as well as the New Testament was considered absolutely essential, if not to Christianity, at least to orthodoxy, and to an honest pretension to the position of a clergyman in the English Church.[1]

¶ Mr. Huxley once wrote that if men wished really to be reconciled to God, they ought to study His laws, and seek to obey them. As used by him, the advice savoured somewhat of a half-truth, for the allusion seemed to be to physical law only. But if it is made wide enough to embrace spiritual law, then his counsel is one of the truest and most profound which can be given.[2]

But, passing from this, let us consider the possibility of fighting against God in things which have a more practical reference to our own day. Taking, for example, the relation of the Church to social life, we are met by various remarkable applications of the prin-

[1] H. Rashdall.
[2] D. Macleod, *Christ and Society,* 29.

ciple we have been considering. How false, for instance, does the distinction appear which so many people draw between sacred and secular! What mischief has it not wrought! As if God had to do with Churches and pious feelings and not with ordinary life and its multitudinous interests and requirements. As if human nature had to deal with Divine law only when under the influence of things spiritual, instead of recognizing that every part of our nature—every tendency, every taste, every power, every desire—has a right and a wrong use, in other words, is under a Divine law that may be broken or observed; and that for religion to shut itself up in one sphere of interest and to neglect these manifold powers, tastes, and tendencies, because they may be engaged on matters that are usually termed secular, is to deny the true function of religion. Nay, such conduct is certain to produce the consequences which inevitably spring from every breach of law.

Thus is it that men have fought in the name of religion against that law of our nature which makes us desire beauty, and which vindicates for Art a Divine purpose; or they have ignored the needs which have been implanted in our humanity, making amusement and relaxation almost a necessity, and have frowned upon humour, wit, laughter, kindly fellowship, and kindly merriment as if somehow profane. Such forgetfulness of the laws of God, as seen in the facts of human nature as He has constituted it, has always led to fearful reactions. The Puritanism of the Commonwealth was the harbinger of the immoral laxity of the Restoration. The breach of law on the one side, by failure to observe the right use of these affiinities, brought on a wild reaction in the flood of licentiousness which broke every limit.

The mistakes of authority will not, in the long run, do much harm to the individuals attacked, since to suffer for a cause always brings its compensations; they will not stay the advance of truth, for no Canute can check its tide; nor will they destroy religion, which has its roots deep down in human nature. But they do paralyse, and in the end they may even stifle and strangle to death, the Church which is responsible for them.

(2) We may fight against God *through wickedness*, because we prefer evil to good. In practice this shades into ignorance, and sometimes the two are very closely interwoven: a man's hate of his opponent may make him refuse to examine his arguments, while, on the other hand, he may choose evil rather than good because his conception of good is inadequate through ignorance.

They fight against God who perpetuate any evil. All wrong is enmity against God. Sin is warfare against the King of heaven; hence all who encourage sin are fighting against God. Gamaliel saw that by furthering persecution the council might be found engaged in that unholy war. It is indeed true that sinners know not what they do. Once let it flash upon them that they are fighting against God and surely they will desist. If in Church or State we are parties to the continuance of what is wrong we are God's antagonists. If in the home we persist in evil we fight against God. If in daily business we persevere in an unjust course, then we are on the warpath against God. We help to perpetuate evil when we make things more difficult for people who are trying to abolish it. We fight against God when we fight against His soldiers.

The Sanhedrin were not the last people to do this. The temptation is sometimes a real and active one to-day. Have any of us hindered people from doing good because we did not like them, or did not agree with some belief of theirs? Much of the most resolute conflict with the evils of society, with the devils of impurity, intemperance, greed, with the misery and degradation in our great cities, is waged by those on whom many within the Church look with impatience or contempt. If the Churches of today venture to forbid and discourage those who are doing noble work because they follow not with them, because they adopt strange methods and decline to walk in the good old paths, then, depend upon it, their doom is near.

(3) We may fight against God *through indifference*. This is the way of 'the men that are settled on their lees.' They are indifferent; they don't care. And it is very hard to convince them that since they are not doing anything active they are fighting. But they

are. By sitting still they make the walls of the fortress behind which God's opponents are entrenched. When faith is no more than an opinion, failing to reach the affections and desires, and kindling no hope; when it is but a creed-belief, reached by proofs and evidences like some conclusion in mathematics, and lying as far away from our real interests as a theory regarding the rings of Saturn or the distance of the fixed stars—then it is what St. James calls a 'dead faith.' It has nothing to do with the man, who would not be a whit different had he never formed that opinion at all. If we are reaping a whirlwind in the degradation of tens of thousands of our people, is it not because in the department called religion we have been going to church and saying our prayers, while in other departments called secular we have been fighting against God?

¶ Popular Christianity, while naming the name of God, and propounding its theologies, and building its churches, has miserably come short of the purpose of Christ, and most blindly and sinfully misunderstood His meaning. For what do you see? Those very Christians who, within the sphere of what they call 'religion,' busy themselves with ecclesiasticisms and theologies, or theories and signs of salvation, have all the while, in other spheres, fought, and do fight, a continual battle against God, and conduct social, commercial and political life on principles which are in direct antithesis to the laws of Christ's Kingdom. We have never even tried to work out the laws of Christ which we profess to obey. And what is the result? Whence come these wars and fightings among us? Whence come these gulfs of separation between rich and poor? Whence comes the array of Trades' Unions against Masters' Unions? Whence the feverish and cruel rush of competition, with its trampling down of the weak? Whence comes the long line of wounded, and the fearful suffering and despair which are left on the track of the vaunted march of civilisation as on the track of a desolating army? [1]

If life is always a warfare
  Between the right and the wrong,

[1] D. Macleod, *Christ and Society*, 34.

And good is fighting with evil
  For ages and aeons long—

Fighting with eager cohorts,
  With banners pierced and torn,
Shining with sudden splendour,
  Wet with the dew of morn;

If all the forces of heaven,
  And all the forces of sin,
Are met in the infinite struggle
  The souls of the world to win;

If God's is the awful battle
  Where the darkling legions ride—
Hasten to sword and to saddle!
  Lord, let me fight on Thy side!

2. *If we fight for God we must learn to fight.*—'Trust in the Lord and keep your powder dry,' said the Puritans of Cromwell. We need not expect God to keep our powder dry. Unless there is faithful and resolute preparation on our part we shall be beaten in the fight. Now it is a most remarkable thing that common-sense should be accepted in every realm of life but the spiritual. We cannot expect to win any war unless we make preparation for the struggle; and yet men hope to win, without making preparation, the spiritual battles that they are called to wage every day. One would have thought that they would have renewed their faith and revived their courage every day before venturing into the field. One would have thought they would have burnished their armour and tempered their weapons. One would have expected them to be in desperate earnest in their preparation for the battle on which eternal well-being depends. But no; they are content to let the rust eat into their weapons, and the damp spoil their powder, and then they think when they fail that it is God's fault, not their's.

(1) *We must learn how to fight.*—We must learn to fight effectively. We may 'beat the air' in fighting, not by fighting with the wrong foe, but by fighting with the real foe wrongly.

Which of us has not done this? Which of us has not often been foiled in encountering his besetting sin? Which of us has not regretted, and resolved, and determined, yes, and prayed,

against his chief sin, and yet fallen again before it as soon as it assailed him? This is sad, and wrong, and deeply discouraging: we ought to have strength, considering what a motive Christ has given us in His own death, considering what an Almighty helper Christ has promised to us in His Holy Spirit. It is for want of faith; for want of simply accepting what is simply offered; for want of really believing that there is a Holy Spirit given to all men for the asking, that we thus fall, even when experience of sin, and sorrow for sin, and resolution against sin, and even prayer for victory over sin, have not been wholly wanting.

Now, if this be so, even with regret, even with resolution, even with prayer, what can be expected where all these things are in great part wanting? where there is an utter want of earnestness, of appreciation of holiness, of desire after heaven? where a person goes to the very edge of temptation, and only just hopes that he may not pass the bounds? where the means of grace are slightly used and little valued? where the conscience wakes only to punish, never to forewarn, never to forearm? Can we call such Christians combatants at all? Who shall call that fighting in which every single blow beats the air?

(2) *We must learn to keep on fighting.*—Fighting is no use if it is not a fight to a finish. And sometimes it is very hard to go on. But there is One who knows exactly what we are, and what we can bear. Our constitution, our circumstances, are understood by Him; He has ordained them for us. And yet He is not tempting us to sink; He is tempting us to rise. He has allowed us to enter into this conflict that we may come out of it stronger men. He does not desire us to fall in it. If we commit ourselves to Him, He will not suffer us to fall in it. The falls we have had are all so many motives and goads to put that trust in Him which they show us that we cannot put in ourselves; and every lust of the flesh may be the instrument, in His hands, of awakening a stronger lust of the spirit to overcome it; and that temperament which we have murmured against, when we despaired of directing it by our own wisdom, if we leave it in His hands may prove to be the fittest for the purposes to which He has destined us.

¶ Suso, talking to a squire about tournaments, is told by the squire: 'He who proves himself to be best at bearing sword-strokes and assaults, and who shows no fainthearted-ness in this, but behaves himself courageously and manfully, and sits firm, and bears up against the blows—he it is who receives the prize.' 'Tell me,' said the Servitor, 'if a man were only brave in the first onset, would that be enough?' 'No,' was the reply, 'he must remain firm to the end of the tournament, and though the blows which he receives bring sparks of fire into his eyes and make the blood flow from his face, he must endure them all, if he is to obtain the glory of victory.' 'But, dear comrade,' quoth the Servitor, 'may he not weep or look miserable when he gets such dreadful blows?' 'No,' was the answer; 'and though his heart sinks within him, as happens to many, he may do nothing of the kind, but he must bear himself joyously and bravely, otherwise he will become a laughing-stock, and lose the glory and the ring.' At these words the Servitor was greatly impressed, and, sighing deeply, he exclaimed, 'Ah! glorious Lord God! must the knights of this world endure so much suffering for so small a reward, which is in itself a mere nothing! How fitting then it is that one should endure much greater labours for the everlasting prize! O sweet Lord, would that I were worthy to be Thy spiritual knight! O beautiful loving Wisdom, whose richness of grace is incomparable in any land, would that my soul might receive a ring from Thee! For it would I suffer whatever might be Thy will!' And he began to weep, from the great fervour that he felt. Now when he reached the place to which he was going, God sent him great and cruel sufferings in such number that the poor Servitor nearly lost all his trust in God; and many eyes became wet with tears through pity of him. He had forgotten all his knightly daring and his vow, and he became melancholy and resentful towards God, who had drawn upon him and sent him such sufferings. In the morning, however, there came a calm over his soul; and his bodily senses being stilled, a voice spoke

within him, 'Where is now thy knightly prowess? What a knight of straw and scarecrow of a man he must be who is so daring in prosperity and so despairing in adversity! Not thus is won the everlasting ring for which thou longest.' He answered, 'O Lord! the jousts which a man must wage within himself for Thee are long and wearisome.' 'Therefore,' said the voice, 'the glory and the honour and the ring of my knights who are honoured by me are stable and everlasting.' Upon this the Servitor, in deep contrition, said very humbly, 'Lord I am in the wrong. Only let me weep while I suffer, for my heart is very full.' The answer came, 'Alas for thee! Wilt thou weep like a woman, and disgrace thyself before the court of heaven? Wipe thine eyes and bear thyself joyously, so that neither God nor men may know that thou hast wept on account of thy sufferings.' Then the Servitor began to laugh, though the tears were streaming down his cheeks, and he vowed to God that he would no more wish to weep, that so he might obtain from Him the spiritual ring.[1]

A man said unto his angel:
'My spirits are fallen thro',
And I cannot carry this battle;
O brother! what shall I do?

'The terrible Kings are on me,
With spears that are deadly bright,
Against me so from the cradle
Do fate and my fathers fight.'

Then said to the man his angel:
'Thou wavering, foolish soul,
Back to the ranks! What matter
To win or to lose the whole,

As judged by the little judges
Who hearken not well, nor see?
Not thus, by the outer issue,
The Wise shall interpret thee.

Thy will is the very, the only,
The solemn event of things;
The weakest of hearts defying
Is stronger than all these Kings.

Though out of the past they gather,
Mind's Doubt and Bodily Pain,
And pallid Thirst of the Spirit
That is kin to the other twain,

And Grief, in a cloud of banners,
And ringletted Vain Desires,
And Vice, with the spoils upon him
Of thee and thy beaten sires,

While Kings of eternal evil
Yet darken the hills about,
Thy part is, with broken sabre,
To rise on the last redoubt;

To fear not sensible failure,
Nor covet the game at all,
But fighting, fighting, fighting,
Die, driven against the wall!'[1]

[1] From *The Life of Henry Suso written by Himself.*

## They Have Their Reward.

Josh. xxiv. 4.—'I gave unto Esau Mount Seir, to possess it; and Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.'

1. Jacob was the heir of the Promise, the hope which was glimmering on the horizon like the dawn of a better day. The future, not of Israel alone but of humanity, lay with him, and his brother was a common man with no high destiny. We should have expected that Esau would drift out of sight and be forgotten, and Jacob be loaded with every blessing which the heart of man could desire and the hand of God bestow. But what came to pass? To Esau, the man of naught, the Lord granted an immediate and abundant heritage. He gave him Mount Seir, with its pleasant slopes, its fertile valleys, and its smiling plains on the southern border of Canaan, that heathen land where, unrecognized, unsuspected, were slumbering the destinies of the world. Esau got that for his heritage, and he and his children settled there in peace and never, from that hour, suffered a day's want or weariness. They prospered, they multiplied, they became, not indeed a great, but a strong and fierce nation—the people of Edom.

And what of Jacob, the heir of the Promise, the hope of humanity, the depository of God's undying purpose? He remained a homeless

[1] L. I. Guiney.

wanderer. Esau found his pleasant heritage; but Jacob and his children must go down into Egypt and toil and suffer for four hundred years. Do you not think that, when they saw all this, the Israelites would have sore misgivings and searchings of heart? 'If this,' they would reason, 'be all that has come of the Promise, what is it worth? Is our hope better than a dream? Are we the dupes of a foolish fancy, a fond delusion? Surely it were well to settle down with our flocks and herds and abandon the wild and profitless adventure.'

No doubt they would talk thus. But now, at the end of the long and bitter ordeal, Joshua assembles the people and summons them to reflection. And this is the argument that underlies his retrospect: 'Look back, and how does it appear to you now? Our wanderings are over; the end, so long sought, so eagerly desired, so often despaired of, has been reached at last. Remember the past, and consider what it means. Here we are, with those centuries behind us, centuries of suffering, of heart-searching and heart-sinking, of doubt and fear; and behold, it has all been a precious discipline. It has formed us to courage and endurance. It has made us the people of God and revealed to us His purposes; and we are here with a high destiny before us and the qualities which that destiny demands. And look across our border and see the children of Esau. They got their heritage at the moment; they never knew the weariness of delay, the bitterness of disappointment. And what are they? Heathen. See the smoke of their unhallowed sacrifices; hear the shouting of their priests of Baal. They are called Edom—Red—and their hands are crimson with blood and their sins are as scarlet. Look at Edom; look at Israel: would you have history reversed? Would you wish that the Lord had given your father Jacob Mount Seir to possess it, and that Esau and his children had gone down into Egypt in your stead? Would you have missed the discipline, so long and sore, which has made you what you are—men with a splendid destiny and capacity to achieve it? Would you have it otherwise?'

2. It may seem a poor and dispiriting ideal which thus relegates the prizes of life to a distant and perhaps visionary future. But stay a moment! Consider it, and you will recognize that this is no morbid fantasy of an other-worldly Christianity; it is the ideal that every man who would live to purpose cherishes and practises.

(1) Look at the *student*. See him 'scorning delights and living laborious days,' stinting himself of food and raiment that he may purchase books, denying himself rest and recreation that he may win knowledge. He cares nothing for the present; he flings it from him with contempt, and dreams of the future. His heritage is farther on. What is he striving after? That prize, that medal, that scholarship; and he fancies that he will be content if only he wins it. Yes, but when it is his, it loses its charm, and he finds that there is a nobler goal beyond. Each achievement is but a fresh incentive, a new starting-point; and he goes on still pursuing his ideal, never resting, ever reaching forward.

> God's of the future not the past; 'tis there
> We need Him for a beacon-light to point
> The road uphill. The power that is in us
> Drives us ascending, but we blindly grope
> And stumble over stones, find devious paths
> That lead us where we started, if the flame
> Shine not to tell us where our journey goes;
> But when we think to reach it, lo, the light
> Shifts and we see it higher on the hill,
> And ever seeking find not, but we climb.[1]

(2) Look at the *artist*. Among the treasures of the School of Fine Arts at Paris there is a bronze statue of Mercury—the masterpiece of the sculptor Briants. Dreaming of fame, Briants tenanted a bare garret, at once his lodging and his studio. Miserably poor, he lacked food and fuel, and one bitter night he went shivering to bed. That evening he had put the finishing touches to the model of his statue, and he suddenly bethought himself that if the damp clay froze, it would warp and crack and his labour would be lost. He sprang up and wrapped all his scanty clothing about it. In the morning a friend visited the garret and found the model un-

[1] W. Ray, *Poems of Yesterday and To-day*, 48.

harmed, but the artist was lying stiff and stark, frozen to death. He had given his life for his work. And he had his reward—the heritage of an immortal name.

3. It is the part that we would all play. Yes, there is no true man amongst us who is not continually scorning Mount Seir and going down into Egypt. And the Lord Jesus asks us to carry the principle farther and make a bolder venture of faith. He tells us that beyond this little life there is a life which is 'better than all the golden fancies of all our golden dreams.' It is the heritage of the brave and true, and He says to us: 'Have you the courage to choose it and to face suffering and sacrifice that you may attain it and be fit for its enjoyment?'

This is His appeal. It is indeed a venture, but it is a reasonable venture. It is precisely the sort of venture which we are continually making for lesser prizes, and His assurance is our guarantee. There is a Land of Promise, a blessed home beyond the wilderness in the far-off City of God. 'Take my word for it,' says Jesus. 'If it were not so, I would have told you.' The choice is continually being presented to us, and if we take the easy way, we are doubly the losers. We miss the Land of Promise, and when we have got Mount Seir we find it a polluted place. The better heritage lies farther on; and we can attain it only by following Jesus, entering ever more closely into His fellowship, and sharing ever more fully His patience, His gentleness, His sacrifice, His unconquerable trust in the love of God and the transcendence of the things unseen and eternal.

## Grace and Sacrifice.

Josh. xxiv. 13, 14.—'I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat. Now therefore . . . '

The writer is recalling the conquest by the children of Israel of the land of Canaan. It was an old land, which for centuries had been the home of an industrious and fairly civilized people. The earlier inhabitants had replenished the earth and subdued it; they had made it a country of teeming flocks and fertile fields; they had their workshops and their trade; they had their towns and cities stored with the treasures of the past and with their own accumulated wealth. Then the tempest burst upon their heads. The Hebrews came up out of the desert, crossed the Jordan, defeated the Canaanites in battle, and installed themselves as heirs to their valuable and hard-won possessions. The moral aspect of the situation did not trouble the Jewish conscience; or it was disposed of by the reflection that they had an ancient title to the land in which their fathers had once sojourned, that above all it was a gift to them from the God whom they served, and who had crowned their arms with victory. It was not felt that there was any occasion to pity the old inhabitants whose industry and skill had made Canaan so rich a prize: the only feeling was gratitude at the easy terms on which their possessions had passed into the hands of the nomads from the desert. And the feeling was put in words which were yet to fit far grander themes: 'The Lord hath given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.'

1. The event of which Joshua spoke is repeated in its main features in the relations of the successive generations of mankind. It takes place, not only in the violent way of conquest and spoliation, but also in the peaceful way in which, in the course of nature, one generation labours and those which follow enter into its labours.

(1) When we look around us in a rich old land like our own, we see it heaped up with material wealth which has been gratuitously received by the living as their inheritance from the far larger population that has now its earthly lodging in the crowded graveyards. There are the roads and the railways, the cultivated fields, the villages and towns with buildings that stand for centuries. In addition there is the vast accumulation of knowledge and experience, of invention and skill, which constitutes the foundation and the

machinery of material well-being—a stupendous creation in which is embodied infinitely more than we can measure or imagine of human planning and toil and sweat, and even of the lives and the souls of men. And while it is true that this patrimony is not administered on terms of pure grace, since a large part of the material wealth requires to be reproduced in each generation, it is still true that it is owing to the bequest from our ancestors that we find ourselves in civilization and not in savagery. Our heritage has been handed on without money and without price by those to whom we can now make no acknowledgment and offer no return.

(2) Still more conspicuously are the principles of sacrifice and grace revealed in the conditions on which a people holds its higher or spiritual possessions. The matter might be illustrated from the inheritance of language and literature. A great language like our own is one of the wonders of the world; every new word, every phrase that lives, was once an original and happy stroke of genius; the language as a whole is a consummate work of genius; and when our minds develop we find it lying ready-made for all uses, great and small, of which our powers are capable. The literature which the world agrees to call great has had a heavier original cost. Carlyle was fond of repeating that there was never a man with the prophet's insight who had not eaten his bread in sorrow: and it is no accident that the most precious portions of our Bible come from the prophets who spoke for or to a nation when it was being hammered on the anvil or purified in the furnace; and from Christ and His disciples when they were looking forward to or looking back upon the Cross. The golden ages in the history of literature seem all to have had a background, if not of tragedy, at least of costly enterprise and perilous conflict. Of the poets it has been said, with a large measure of truth, that they 'learned in suffering what they taught in song.' And the terms are easy on which we receive the gift that comes to us stained with tears and blood: the treasures are available for us in cheap editions and free libraries, and they can be appropriated by the poorest as the result of a free education.

(3) The same observations are made when we go through the list of the rights and privileges which make up the spiritual patrimony of our people. National independence was counted a thing of such value by our ancestors that, in order to maintain it, they paid heavy toll of such wealth as they possessed, and of the richest of their blood. We have our social and political liberties—freedom of migration, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, a voice in controlling and guiding the destinies of our country. Such things were once won in rebellions and civil war. We have our religious liberties, of which the chief is that men have been delivered from a spiritual tyranny, that they choose their own creed, and worship God according to their conscience. We have these liberties because this land once produced men who deemed that nothing else was so much worth living for, and that such liberty was also worth dying for, if it could not be otherwise purchased. And in this religion we are especially impressed by the disproportion between the original sacrifice and the terms on which the benefits are transmitted. Very light are the succession duties that are exacted from the heirs of the spiritual patrimony. We have enjoyed our rights of conscience and kindred liberties as freely as the air we breathed, and can practically say that what once cost others everything we have taken over for nothing.

(4) Finally, the argument carries us into the inmost sanctuary of our religion. The chief difference is what we might have expected—that as the blessings here spoken of are the greatest conceivable, so the sacrifice which they demanded was the costliest conceivable, while the conditions of possession are described in terms of unqualified free grace. The blessings are the greatest that the heart can conceive: the forgiveness of sins, the friendship of God, the presence in the soul of the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, victory over the world with all its sin and evil, and the title to a life to come with an exceeding weight of glory. And the doctrine of the gospel is that the ground and foundation of the sovereign blessings is an unparalleled sacrifice. It is declared that they rest on a sacrifice which was

unique—in respect of the dignity of the Sufferer, of the purity and blamelessness of the Victim, of His obedience unto death under the most cruel agonies both of body and of soul. It was also unique in that it was a sacrifice which carried the Cross even into the life of God, who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up to die for mankind.

Not less is it distinctive of the Christian gospel that it declares that the blessings which were purchased by an unexampled sacrifice are dispensed on terms of unsurpassable magnanimity. The heart of the gospel is that we may claim forgiveness, and all other blessings which follow in its train, by that act of child-like trust in the mercy of God which bears the name of faith. The essence of the Christian religion is that those who believe are comforted by God's forgiveness to the end that they may become good, not that they are commanded to become good in the hope of meriting the favour of God. 'By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.'

¶ I do not think that the gratuitous character of the Christian salvation is at all generally understood. Perhaps a majority of Christians have always thought, like the Jewish Christians whom Paul addressed in the Epistle to the Galatians, that they are not under grace but under the law—that they are in the same position spiritually in which a man finds himself in this world who, being poor, sets out to make a fortune, or, being ignorant, sets out to acquire learning, and that they have to achieve their purpose by labour, perseverance and desert. But this is precisely the view which Paul declared to be the chief misunderstanding. The blessings of the gospel, he reiterated, are not the reward of achievements, but gifts. He had found that in his own experience God dealt with him on terms of pure grace; and he also found that the gospel of grace was in harmony with the character of God and with the needs of men. God was too great, he felt, not to do things in the grandest way. On the other hand, man was too weak in his sin-bound nature to hope to be able to accomplish anything that would merit the favour of God. The doctrine of free grace can be readily misunderstood and easily abused, and, as Hooker says, may be 'counted folly or frenzy or fury.' But with Hooker many have added in all ages: 'It is our wisdom and our comfort; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that God hath made Himself the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God.' [1]

2. But now what have we to say to this apparent injustice which clings to the system of vicarious suffering?

(1) Some think that there is a sufficient explanation and justification in what is called the solidarity of the human race. They say that we must look upon mankind, or upon the nation, as a whole, and that it is a sufficient reward for those who have paid the price, that their country, or it may be the world, will be the better and the richer for their offering. To many, however, of our serious thinkers, it has seemed that the difficulty can be satisfactorily met only if we believe in individual immortality, and hold that a Divine Judge will one day render to every man according to his works. It does not consort with our Divinely implanted conception of justice that those who sowed should be denied a hand in the reaping. It is an unwelcome thought, not only to Christian faith, but to a mind which believes in a rational government of the world, that nothing remains of vanished peoples that toiled and suffered for human progress save mounds of dust and ashes, or that heroes and martyrs who died in some noble cause should themselves have no knowledge of, or conscious share in, the blessings which they won for others at such a price. It is true that many of those who have done most for the world have asked nothing for themselves, but have been content to do the duty which was plain to them, and to leave the reward, if such there be, to the discretion of a higher Power. But we are entitled to believe that the best results of human history are gathered up in their essence in the souls which live on in the unseen world of spirits, and that it lies in the will and in the power of God, not only to save them alive, but to give them, as was written of the Suffer-

[1] W. P. Paterson.

ing Servant, to see of the travail of their soul and to be satisfied therewith.

¶ Every act done in Christ receives its exact and appropriate reward. They that are meek shall inherit the earth. They that are pure shall see God. They that suffer shall reign with Him. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever. They that receive a righteous man in the name of a righteous man—that is, because he is a righteous man—shall receive a righteous man's reward. Even the cup of cold water, given in the name of Christ, shall not lose its reward.[1]

¶ St. Thomas Aquinas had a dream. He thought the Lord Jesus came to him and said, 'Thomas, thou hast written well of Me; what reward dost thou want?' And Thomas said, 'Non alium mercedem, nisi te solum, Domine' —('No other reward save Thyself only, O Lord'). That is *our* reward, and nothing can be so great.

(2) The practical corollary is that those who have lived under the reign of free grace should themselves be willing, if their turn comes, to take over the part of vicarious sacrifice. As a fact, this call has been made upon our generation, and we have seen with our own eyes a sudden and startling transformation in the rôle of our people. Formerly our life seemed to be built up mainly of inherited privilege, and as in a night it took on the character of vicarious suffering. The sacrifice is still too near and too overwhelming for us fully to realize its magnitude. But, whatever the other consequences may prove to be, the great sacrifice has certainly raised the nation as a whole in the scale of moral dignity. It can feel itself to be no longer a pauper generation living on the bounty of bygone benefactors, but a martyr generation which has itself been called on to pay the customary cost of all great things in toil and tears and blood, and which has thus been qualified to hand on a great inheritance to the generations which are to come.

¶ The European War is a riddle. To think of the very flower of our manhood being offered as a holocaust to the Moloch of war is an anomaly and a tragedy not easily surpassed in its gruesomeness. It is so gruesome that those who knew it best approve it least. They think of their dead comrades stretched upon the sward and refuse to allow their lips to utter what in their deepest heart they feel. Bow the head in silence! as the plaintive dirge, 'The Flowers of the Forest,' is borne on the breeze; for each hastily dug grave, like some 'vast cathedral,' receives the ashes of one of our Empire's deathless dead. Heroes all! we leave them in the Father's keeping; for instinctively we bring the two sacrifices together, and know, as the wounded hand of the one is laid upon the pierced feet of the other, that the covenant thus sealed in death can never again be broken. This is at once the inspiration of the preacher, the hope of the soldier, and the consolation of the bereaved. In home and Church and nation we become strong and self-possessed; for the divine and human factors have coalesced.[1]

[1] F. W. Robertson.

## Choosing.

Josh. xxiv. 15.—'Choose you this day whom ye will serve.'

An old campaigner has come to the end of his days, and in the assembly of his people he gives them his last counsel, the matured warning and experience of his years. He reviews their wonderful history, the long succession of providential mercies shining like an unbroken line of light far back to the days of their Egyptian bondage. He rehearses the Lord's dealings with His people, and he also rehearses the people's dealings with the Lord. He recalls their murmurings, their reluctant service, their dubious homage, their uncertain attachment, their frequent revolts. He declares that they have never settled down into steady devotion to the Lord. And so this is the urgent counsel of the dying warrior to his people: 'In one way or another make up your minds! Don't go any further with this dubious, limping gait! Settle down to something positive and decisive! Choose you this day whom ye will serve.'

How momentous was the choice that was

[1] J. Adams, *The Great Sacrifice*, 3.

made at the instance of Joshua on that historic day! For if Israel had chosen the god of any of the surrounding peoples, the world would have gone wrong. We have but small conception of the filthiness, the barbarity, and the cruelty of the worship of the Semitic peoples who were all around the little nation of Israel. As Lucretius, the pagan poet, has well put it—

'Gainst all things good and beautiful
'Tis oft religion doth the foulest treason.

Israel saved us from the degradation of the religious ideal. The moral uniqueness and the spiritual loftiness of the worship of Jehovah have prepared the way for the Christianity of Christ. So we see what a far-reaching effect the decision of Israel had in response to the call of Joshua, 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve.'

1. *A Choice.*—'Choose,' said Joshua. The force of the appeal can never be spent. It is still addressing itself to every earnest man who scorns to be the sport of each passing whim of temper or caprice of circumstance, but who desires to live his brief life in this world to some real and lasting purpose. In all the wasted opportunities and ruined lives that try our faith and hope, God is ringing loudly into our dull ears, 'Choose ye.' Others have missed the mark through lack of definite choice and aim, therefore choose ye. There is something so solemn, so appalling, in this tremendous power of choice. It means that man is not, or at least need not be, the slave and sport of fortune; that in part he determines his own fate, that he is his own judgment. It means that he need not be crushed by the opposition of circumstance; that it is his duty, as it is within his power, to control and modify circumstance. What is the Bible but the record of the tragedy of evil choice? It begins with the story of a foolish choice, and its history is just the record of the yearning of God to redeem men from such choices with their tragic consequences, and to restore them to that blessedness and peace which can be theirs only if they choose Himself. Choose therefore. It is God's appeal to us as rational beings. Two alternatives are always before us; and in the problem that confronts us—whether it be the decision of our life-work or of the way we shall spend a leisure hour—let us learn to make up our minds.

¶ Carlyle once asked a young man who was walking about listlessly what his aim in life was. The young man replied, in a dazed sort of way, that he had no particular aim, whereupon Carlyle said, in a voice of thunder: 'You have no aim in life? Then get one quick!' The advice is golden. In your outlook on life, in your purposes, your ideals, your aims, *be definite.* Make sure that you know what you want and then find out the best way of getting it. An ideal is meant to be realised. Therefore it is not enough for us to *know* what we might do: we must be prepared to *do* it, and do it at whatever cost. Principles are of little value to us unless we are prepared to live up to them; ideals have no dynamic power unless we deliberately determine to live in accordance with them.[1]

2. *The time of the choice.*—'This day,' said Joshua. Time has no meaning for God: for Him who is and was and is to be there is no yesterday and no to-morrow. But we are creatures of time. We stand at a certain point in the history of the world. A hundred years ago we were not: in another hundred years we shall not be—not at least in the visible world, taking part in its social and political affairs, nor in the visible Church, sharing her struggles and aspirations. 'We look before and after,' and both areas of time—that which preceded us and that which will follow us—are full of instruction and stimulus. Our past may kindle us to new endeavour or overwhelm us with remorse, according as we have been faithful or false to the best thing that we knew; our future may fill us with hope or despair, according to our use or misuse of the past. But of the past and of the future we are not masters: we command nothing but the present. The past is past, the future is God's, the present alone is ours. We cannot choose in the past: it is gone, and, with it, all power of modifying it by the free exercise of our will. We cannot choose in a future which we

[1] C. F. Walpole, *The Building of Personality*, 15.

may never see. The present, and the present only, is the time of choice. It is often said that most men live only in the present. In one sense that is true; in another sense it would be nearer the truth to say that few men really live in the present at all, with a clear appreciation of its sacredness, its solemn and infinite value. 'The present hour,' said Emerson, 'is the decisive hour, and every day is doomsday.'

The Present, the Present is all thou hast
For thy sure possessing;
Like the patriarch's angel hold it fast
Till it gives its blessing.

Then of what is to be, and of what is done,
Why queriest thou?—
The past and the time to be are one,
And both are Now![1]

3. *The object of the choice.*—'Whom ye will serve.' The noblest choice that any man can make is the choice of service. Most men in their heart of hearts believe that there is nothing finer in this world than power. They like to feel that they stand, like Saul, head and shoulders above the people: they long to sit on thrones on the right hand and on the left. But there can be no more perilous ambition than that—the desire for power unqualified by the passion for service. Seek first, said Jesus, the Kingdom of God: choose first whom ye will serve. All gifts of ability or influence which give a man a commanding position among his fellows carry with them a most solemn responsibility. The men who possess them are stewards, and their true glory is to be effective servants of the community in which they live. There comes to us all the temptation to choose the course which will enable us to move through life with the maximum of ease and the minimum of trouble. But the call of God is very different: 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve.' The Divine path is the path of service; the Divine choice is the choice of service. If we test ourselves by our readiness to make this choice, we shall find how unworthy we are of Him who loved not Himself, but who gave Himself up to the death for us all.

¶ Some words of Alexander Duff, the pioneer of missionary education in India, may fittingly be quoted here.

'Whether my days be few or many, whether my old age be one of decrepitude or of priviledged usefulness, my best and latest thoughts will be still of India. Wherever I wander, wherever I roam; wherever I labour, wherever I rest, my heart will be still in India. So long as I am in this tabernacle of clay I shall never cease, if permitted by a gracious Providence, to labour for the good of India; my latest breath will be spent in imploring blessings on India and its people. And when at last this frail mortal body is consigned to the silent tomb, while I myself think that the only fitting epitaph for my tombstone would be—"Here lies Alexander Duff, by nature and practice a simple guilty creature, but saved by grace, through faith in the blood and righteousness of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"—were it, by others, thought desirable that any addition should be made to this sentence, I would reckon it my highest earthly honour should I be deemed worthy of appropriating the grandly generous words, already suggested by the exuberant kindness of one of my oldest native friends, in some such form as follows: "By profession a missionary; by his life and labours, the true and constant friend of India".'[1]

[1] Whittier.

## Approval and Choice.

Josh. xxiv. 15.—'Choose you this day whom ye will serve.'

'THOU approvest of things that are excellent,' says St. Paul. And he proceeds to show that approval does not carry us far. For approval is but a feeble emotion. A true and keen æsthetic sense as to matters of right and obligation, while it may enhance the beauty, can add nothing to the strength of character, and is always liable to be overborne by the appetites, the desires, the loves, the passions. These are the motive powers. They prompt the choice, govern the will, and give tone to the life.

[1] W. Paton, *Alexander Duff*, 178.

They determine the man's place, whether among nobler or baser spirits—among those that are elect of God and honoured of their brethren, or among those whose names are blotted from the book of life eternal. We are, not what we approve, but what we choose. Let us see, then, what is involved in choice.

1. In the first place, the definite choice—none the less real when unconfessed—of certain primary objects of desire or pursuit is the common habit, nay, the necessity of the developed and matured mind. The separate volitions of each passing day are not desultory, as they seem, but are in part determined, in part essentially modified, by the life-choice. That there may be an effective, persistent choice there must be strong feeling, vivid emotion, enthusiasm. We shall never prosper unless we love our work. Heart and soul, no less than mind and strength, must be given to it; else, whatever our powers, we shall never rise above the lowest ranks and the meanest drudgery of our profession. If enthusiasm be not genius, it supplies the place and fulfils the office of genius. Some of the greatest men in their respective vocations have given little early promise; but because they loved their work, it soon glowed under their hands—their dullness became brilliancy, their awkwardness skill, their stammering eloquence.

If this be the law of all the higher walks of earthly business and ambition, still more is it the law of the religious life. No mere prudential virtue, no close weighing of consequences, no dread of perdition, makes one a saint. There must be a heart-choice of things that are excellent, for their own sake, and for their intrinsic beauty and loveliness. A preference warm and ardent, like that which sustained holy men of old in stripes and ignominy, at the stake and on the cross, alone can make and keep us loyal to duty under the no less severe conflicts that we must wage with appetite and passion, evil example and corrupt influence. The martyr-spirit—the love and pursuit of the right at all hazards—is as essential to the Christian of the twentieth century as it was to the Christian of the first; and the dread of ridicule, or of arduous effort, or of transient inconvenience, or of a solitary position at the bidding of conscience, requires to overcome it no less vigour of will and fervour of spirit than did the dread of death when death might be the penalty for faith.

¶ Lord Shaftesbury might, if he would, have gratified personal ambition and indulged in selfish luxury, for he had the position and the scholarship and the native gifts which would have carried him to the highest places and won for him the homage of Society. But from the first he spurned these things, and chose the better part.

When he was a youth of fourteen or fifteen, and while he was at school at Harrow, going down the Harrow Hill one day alone, he encountered a drunken group, shouting out Bacchanalian songs, as they staggered along with a coffin containing the remains of a deceased comrade. Presently, as they turned a corner, they let their burden drop, and broke out into foul and horrible language. Struck with unspeakable horror at the ghastly scene, the lad, after gazing at it for a few moments as if spell-bound, exclaimed: 'Good heavens! can this be permitted, simply because the man was poor and friendless?' And then and there he registered a vow that, with God's help, he would henceforth make the cause of the poor his own. And that vow he faithfully kept.

Later on, when he was thirty-two years of age and had come into some prominence in the House of Commons, it became necessary for him, in a more emphatic and conspicuous way, to confirm his choice. He was asked to undertake the cause of the factory children, to seek to rectify the cruel wrongs inflicted upon them. He saw what it would mean. On the one hand there lay ease, influence, promotion, troops of friends—for he had already made his mark; on the other hand, worry, anxiety, estrangement of friends, annihilation of leisure, and a life among the poor. He laid the matter before his wife, and she, an excellent woman, likeminded with himself, said: 'It is your duty, and the consequences we must leave. Go forward, and to victory!' He went forward, and victory did at last crown his untiring efforts.[1]

[1] J. Flew, *Saints of Yesterday*, 40f.

2. In every vigorous and persistent choice the personal element plays a large part. Affection or reverence feeds the enthusiasm that inspires generous endeavour, and sustains the patience that can wait for the slow success or the distant prize.

The influence of the affections on every great choice in life is emphatically verified in the one choice which includes all others—that of Christian obedience. A philosophy, even of the unseen, of the higher principles of ethics, of the most recondite spiritual truths, might command our approval, gratify our taste, occupy our studious hours; but it could not constrain the choice, lay its clinching grasp upon the will, and insure that close-clinging loyalty and love which would make us willing for its sake to endure sacrifice and suffering. Abstract truths do not enlist enthusiasts, self-devoted propagandists, martyrs. Stephen would never have died for an impersonal creed; but when he saw heaven opened, and 'Jesus standing on the right hand of God,' it was sweet to die for Him. Therefore is it that religion proffers its claims on our allegiance through our affections. Its exhortation is not, 'Choose *what* law ye will obey,' but 'Choose *whom* ye will serve.' The love of God, the compassion of Christ, the manifestation on the Cross of such tenderness of pity and such intensity of self-sacrifice as have no parallel in the world's history—these are the renovating agencies through which men are brought from the death of sin into the new and heavenly life. The gospel has done nothing for us when it has our mere recognition of its Divinity; its finished work is personal sentiment—love, veneration, loyalty. It is to the intimacy of this personal feeling that Christian piety owes its strength, its tenderness, its power to do and to endure, its persistency, its growth. The religious sentiment which springs not from the love of God and of Christ, but which consists in the mere approval of the things that are excellent—in a cold assent to the truths of Christianity, the wisdom of its precepts, and the faultlessness of its Founder's example—may suffice for the decencies of life in the absence of severe temptation and sorrow; but when the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, the only rock of safety and peace is the living, loving Christ. Only the soul that rests on Him can endure and overcome in the fiery trials of principle, in the crucial tests of character, which in one form or another enter into almost every experience. Only the soul that rests on Him can meet the approach of death in fearless triumph, assured that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

The ocean depths to din are stirred,
  My vessel is a stricken thing
And beats the waters like a bird,
  A bird with but one wing.
As one man we together face
  The fury of the storm,
But a peace that knows not time nor place
  And joy make my heart warm:
For now no ill can come to me!
No ill can come! For should it be
  Even the end and Death,
Nor Death nor Life can wreak me ill,
  And even as we sink—
He who is I, and I who am He—
  With the last breath
My thirsting soul shall drink,
  Shall drink its fill.[1]

## The New God.

Josh. xxiv. 15.—'The gods . . . that were on the other side of the flood.'

The flood in this text means any extraordinary collection of waters, and not necessarily that which we associate with the name. But, in any case, the precise meaning to be attributed to the term is of no great significance. For we may take the word to symbolize the great points of departure, the great testings, in general the great experiences that come to all of us.

Inasmuch as we are born alive in this world, it is certain that some great testings will come to us. Moreover, these testings will so alter our knowledge of, and relation to, God, that we may almost contrast our God before and after them. We may speak of our God on the other side of the flood, even although we were

[1] M. Taylor, *Poems*, 19.

rightly worshipping then. Our thought of God was not false. It was the highest of which we were then capable. But it was not one in which we could remain. It was one from which we were bound to diverge.

1. There is the experience of *the reality of sin.* Ther comes a time to most men, that can in some cases almost be dated, when they awake to the moral meaning of life. Before that, we do indeed distinguish between right and wrong, but the great gulf fixed between them is mercifully shrouded from our eyes. But finally we awake to the sinfulness of sin, and to ourselves as partakers therein. Opposed to the thought of sin, behind the thought of righteousness, there stands a God whose name is Holy. And He is not such an one as that on the other side of the flood. Vaguely we had thought of One, in our childish way, who wanted us to be good, holding of Him an exaggerated thought of our own father. But, now, in the flash that showed us our own hearts, we have seen Him also, of pure eyes, separate, the Righteous One. We have learned newly and awfully of God: and the child's God on the other side of that flood can never come back.

2. There is the experience of *sorrow.* Of course, we have to distinguish sharply between sorrow experienced and sorrow seen. The sharpness of an experienced grief is the chiefest of all floods that bring a man a new thought of God. But the power to see sorrow as it is, and to recognize how far-flung is its shadow, is a flood which also leaves a God on its further side. Whether it be by the ordinary opportunities of observation, or by pain brought into one's own home, there comes a time to us when we recognize the all-but universality of pain, and the irrevocableness of grief. Not all the world's tears, nor all the cryings of its broken hearts, can bring back one of its dead. And this in a God-made and a God-ruled world! So God is seen to be strong. He, who was simply God, now is the inexorable and almighty. And, again, the God on the other side of the flood can never come back.

3. There is the experience of *mental awakening.* For long, though we may ask many questions, we have a satisfactory practical scheme of the universe. The extent of it does not trouble a child; neither does he ask himself if he is important. He is quite sufficiently convinced that he is. But the time must come when we shall awake to vastness and insignificance. We learn of distances, of long dead times and peoples. We guess at the inhabitants of scarce-seen stars and read wonderingly of unknown suns. And back of it all there presses the thought of God. Of what manner shall be the Mind that first conceived and now guides this universe, who Himself dwells nor here, nor there, nor at this time, nor at that, but in the everlasting Now of the high and lofty place? Thus, to holiness and to strength there comes the thought of difference. Concerning the Infinite Spirit, we have no word but this—'He is not such as we are.'

4. Lastly, there is the experience of *life's limitations.* This is the last of the unavoidable harsh experiences of life reserved for the closing years of youth. For a time we say that if God is awful in holiness and in strength, and wrapped in clouds from our understanding, at least we have life; and life, with its boundless possibilities here and now, is given to satisfy. Ah! 'when thou wast young thou girdedst thyself.' Life gives indeed, and greatly, but not all. If we have this, then we have not that; if that, then not this. As all our joys are touched with pain, so all our gain is partly loss. The heart's desire is not here. And yet faith and strength and buoyancy in work are demanded from us. Verily, God is austere. Austerity must be added to the rest. The God that we thought of, before we knew His limitings, is a God that will not come back.

In all this, the point for us to observe is that all these added characteristics seem to put God further off from us. The God on this side of the flood is a God that is far off, unless continually we move nearer to Him.

5. If that were all we might well faint. God has so fashioned life that each experience of our opening years gives us a more awful

thought of Him. It is hard enough to live without that added burden. But we have to remember that God has done two other things. He has granted us the touch of His Spirit on ours, whereby even in the midst of vastness, we feel the greatness of our life, and are bold to cry even to Him, Abba! Father! And He has given us the gift of Jesus Christ. Granted that God is love, and yet is determined that life shall teach us His awfulness, Jesus is exactly the messenger whom He would have sent. For these experiences of life do not send Christ further away. They bring Him near. Sin! To those that feel it, He offers not a distant stainlessness, but His own heart's blood poured forth. Sorrow! Those that are sad will tell if the Elder Brother of the sorrowful is alien to them in their sadness. Vastness! Christ called us friends and thought us worth dying for. And limitings! But Jesus showed how ineffably great life can be that is riveted to a cross, and how, in obedience to the Father's will, there is a peace which the world cannot take away.

Yes, Christ suffices—and God seen in Christ—on both sides of the flood, or of any flood experienced or still to be experienced. For one still remains. There is that great experience in living, which men call death. What manner of God is on the other side of that flood? If sorrow and the rest give such glimpses into His awfulness, what will death give? But Christ is there too; Christ the friend; Christ of the outstretched hand and the tender eyes; whom, let us pray, death will finally display to us in God.[1]

I lift mine eyes to see: earth vanisheth.
I lift up wistful eyes and bend my knee:
Trembling, bowed down, and face to face with Death,
I lift mine eyes to see.

Lo what I see is Death that shadows me:
Yet whilst I, seeing, draw a shuddering breath,
Death like a mist grows rare perceptibly.
Beyond the darkness light, beyond the scathe
Healing, beyond the Cross a palm-branch tree,
Beyond Death Life, on evidence of faith:
I lift mine eyes to see.[1]

[1] J. R. P. Sclater, *The Enterprise of Life*, 329.

## The Household and its Head.

Josh. xxiv. 15.—'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'

'THOU *and* thy house,' 'thou *and* thy seed,' 'ye *and* your children,' 'thou *and* thy son.' Such is ever the language of the Covenant God. In the words of Joshua we have the response from earth, 'as for me *and* my house.' The principle of the Divine dealing is accepted; the parent boldly vouches for his family as well as for himself; the covenant engagement of the Father in heaven is met by the covenant obligation of the father on earth. Joshua is to us here the very model of a godly parent, and in him we can see what parental religion ought to be.

1. Let it be a *personal* religion. 'As *for me* and my house:' Joshua began with himself. We cannot too strongly press the truth that for a godly education the first and the most essential requisite is personal consecration. It is good to reflect on our responsibility, to study our duties and the best way of fulfilling them, to speak with our children, and to pray much for them; but all these may be called accessories. The first thing on the part of the parent is a life devoted to God and His service. It is this that creates the spiritual atmosphere the children are to breathe. It is this that gives our performance of duty and our dealings with our children their spiritual influence. It is this that gives our praying and our working its value with God. 'As for me' there must be no hesitation or half-heartedness in the consciousness or the confession of devotion to God's service. As often as the prayer for God's blessing on the children comes up, it must be in the spirit of David: 'Thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant. . . . Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

servant.' With God and men, in the home and out of it, as well as in the hearts of parents themselves, it must be a settled thing: 'As for me, I will serve the Lord.'

¶ My religion counts for nothing unless it is personal. *As for me,* Joshua says; he can bear an individual witness, and he glories in dedicating himself to an individual loyalty. There is indeed a noticeable singularity about all the most characteristic experiences of life in Christ; I cannot borrow one of them from anybody beside me; each is valueless and empty unless it is my very own. Regeneration, faith, penitence: from these a genuine Christianity starts; and of what worth are they if I do not myself, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, pass through their pains into the joy that succeeds? So it is, too, in after days. My growth in spiritual beauty and spiritual strength cannot be copied from my neighbour's growth; for I have my separate temperament which demands its separate sanctification. And my affection must be distinct, no mere duplicate of someone else's allegiance: nay, let me, as Sir Thomas Browne counsels, 'prove not a cloud but an asterisk in my region.' [1]

2. And let it be as distinctly a *family* religion. Take your stand for all who belong to you: 'As for me *and my house,* we will serve the Lord.' There are parents who do not understand that this is their duty and their privilege. They know not what God has put in their power. They imagine they honour God by thinking that the religion of their children is dependent on God's will apart from their instrumentality. They are so occupied, either with the engagements of their calling in this life, or it may even be with religious work, that they cannot find the time for speaking out and acting out the grand decision, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' Or, perhaps, the father leaves the religion of the children to the care of the mother, and the mother thinks that the father as head is more responsible; they hesitate or neglect to come to a clear and definite understanding, and the religious education of the children does not take the prominent place it ought to. Let each believing parent take Joshua's words, first in the depth of his own soul, then in fellowship with partner and children. The more we speak it out in prayer and conversation—our house is and must be holy to the Lord, our children must be trained first of all for God and His service—the more mightily will the power of the principle assert itself, and help us so to guide the house that it too serves the Lord.

¶ In the Life of Freeborn Garrettson, one of Wesley's followers, we read: That year, having the house to build, Garrettson did not travel, but remained at home to look after its construction. They moved into it in October, 1799, and Mrs. Garrettson wrote in her diary: 'The first night in family prayer, while my blessed husband was dedicating it to the Lord, the place was filled with His presence who in days of old filled the temple with His glory. Every heart rejoiced and felt that God was with us of a truth. Such was our introduction into our new habitation, and had we not cause to say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"?' [1]

3. Let it be a *practical* religion: 'we will *serve* the Lord.' There are many parents with whom the whole of religion consists in salvation, not in service. They pray most earnestly that all their children may be saved; they comfort themselves, if they see them spend their lives in the service of the world, that they will yet be brought in before they die. No wonder that their education for this life has been a failure: they never understood the truth, and never trained their children under its guiding influence, that salvation is subservient to service, that to train for God's service secures the fullest salvation. Did we not hear God say of Abraham, 'I have known him, to the end he may command his children and household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; to the end that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him'? All redemption is for service. God wills not that He should be worshipped without being served. The glory of heaven will

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place,* 57.

[1] *Freeborn Garrettson,* 90.

be that 'His servants shall serve Him.' Let our lives and our homes be consecrated to serving God: let obedience to His will, the carrying out of His commands and devotion to the interests of His Kingdom, give family life its nobility.

¶ James and Janet Paton dwelt in a cottage on a farm at Braehead, near Dumfries, and had eleven children. The most famous of the eleven was Dr. J. G. Paton, the apostle of the New Hebrides. His life-story is one of our great missionary classics. To me the most interesting chapter in such a biography is always the first. It is like watching the grey dawn stealing over the silent hills. It is so fascinating to mark the genesis of grace in a great soul. In Dr. Paton's case the light came by means of no minister, no sermon, no book, no text. He says that he and all his brothers and sisters were led to love the church because the religion of the home was so alluring. As a boy he used to crouch outside the little room into which his father entered for his devotions, and listen—his presence all unsuspected—to his father's prayers. 'Never,' he says, 'in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that humble cottage roof of thatch and oaken wattles. Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and would shut itself up once again in that sanctuary closet, and, hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal, "*He* walked with God; why may not *I*?".'

'There were eleven of us,' Dr. Paton says again, 'brought up in a home like that,' and all of them came to think the church the dearest spot on earth, and the Lord's Day the brightest day of all the week. 'In this world or in any world'—so he closes that first chapter—'all the children of James and Janet Paton will rise up at mention of their names and call them blessed.'[1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Reel of Rainbow*, 194.

4. And let it be a *confessed* religion. It was in presence of tens of thousands of the children of Israel, with the first symptoms of the falling away that came after his death already beginning to show themselves, that Joshua witnessed this good confession, 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' His was not to be the religion of the nation or the religion of neighbours. All might reject God, and he be left alone; still the Lord Jehovah would be his God. As with Abraham leaving his father's house, and Israel leaving Egypt, his too was to be a religion of decision and confession; a coming out and being separate—one of a peculiar people unto the Lord. This is the religion we want in our family life, where not the example or authority of pious people, not inclination or pleasure, but God's own holy and blessed will, revealed in the leading of the Holy Spirit, is sought after as the law of the house. Such a confession will do more than bless the members of our own family.

¶ In the Life of George Herbert we read: He, like Joshua, brought not only 'his own household thus to serve the Lord'; but brought most of his parishioners, and many gentlemen in the neighbourhood, constantly to make a part of his congregation twice a day: and some of the meaner sort of his parish did so love and reverence Mr. Herbert, that they would let their plough rest when Mr. Herbert's saint's-bell rung to prayers, that they might also offer their devotions to God with him; and would then return back to their plough. And his most holy life was such, that it begot such reverence to God, and to him, that they thought themselves the happier, when they carried Mr. Herbert's blessing back with them to their labour. Thus powerful was his reason and example to persuade others to a practical piety and devotion.[1]

[1] G. Herbert, *The Temple*, ed. E. C. S. Gibson, p. lxxxv.

## The Principle of Association.

Josh. xxiv. 27.—'This stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us.'

All readers of the Bible know how common in its pages is this simple, majestic, childlike figure which Joshua employed—the figure which clothes an inanimate and unintelligent object with perception and memory and the power of utterance. It is the figure that children use in their games. It is the figure of a primitive and unsophisticated people, and seems to show how near they stand to Nature, how close they are in the confidence of the rocks and trees and stars. It is the figure that creates a large part of the mythologies and is at the root of much of the monumental instinct of mankind. And in the Bible it is constantly present in its highest, freshest, and most vivid form. In the Book of Genesis when Cain kills Abel it is the actual literal blood of the murdered man that takes a voice and cries out from the ground so that God hears it. When Job tells the story of creation, he makes us hear the 'morning stars' sing together in the sky. When the same Job asserts his integrity and justice, he calls upon the earth that he has tilled to contradict him if he does not speak the truth. 'If my land cry against me, or that the furrows thereof weep together . . . , let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley.' When David goes out into the morning sunlight, he hears the 'heavens declare the glory of God.' When Habakkuk is denouncing woes upon the covetous men and the oppressors of the poor, he makes their very houses speak and tell of the iniquity and cruelty which built them. 'The stone shall cry out of the wall and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.' When Jesus rides across the rocky ridge of Olivet toward Jerusalem, He declares that the rocks under His feet are all ready to break out in His praises if the voices of the people fail 'I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.' And when James upbraids the cruel rich men of his day, even the coins of which they have defrauded their servants take a voice. 'Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth.' The Bible is pre-eminently the book of man; but the world in which man lives and the material things he touches are always present in the Bible for his sake. The splendour of the sunshine, the whisper of the wind, the smell of the rich ground are always there, not for their own beauty or sweetness, but for their ministries and messages to man; and man and Nature stand as close to one another as in the child's fairy story or the poet's dream.

What, then, is the value of association, of that power which gives to the objects that surround mankind a sort of human character and makes them vocal with messages of comfort, of strength, or of rebuke? This is the real subject of our text. Joshua's rock was transformed by the power of association. One hour it was a great dead stone, as silent and uninspiring as any other of the stones among which it lay. The next hour it had been taken up and separated from all its mates for ever. It was thenceforth a sacred stone, a fountain of inspiration, a fire of poetry and life. It was the association with the solemn self-consecration of the Jews that had transformed it. And our association is always the transforming power. Out of our use of the power of association comes much of our best education and our deepest responsibility.

The work that man does upon the world he lives in is really twofold. He makes his changes in its outward face. He turns it by his toil of spade or chisel into forms of use or beauty. He ploughs it with furrows and sprinkles it with cities. This is his first work. And then more subtly he fills it with his associations. Without any change in their shape he sends his history in through the mountains and the fields, so that it clings there for ever. He twines the things that he has done with the scenery of the earth, so that thereafter they are inseparable. Everybody who has any sensibility sees that this second power of man over Nature is

the finer and the nobler. It is the greater enrichment of the world by man. Herod builds a temple at Jerusalem. With vast labour he levels the rough places, and hews the great stone blocks into shape. When it is done, his temple shines like a jewel on its hill. Jesus comes right across the little valley to the Mount of Olives. He changes nothing outward. He sticks no spade into its surface. He leaves each bush and olive-tree as He finds it. But there He ofttimes resorts with His disciples. There He lies prostrate in the struggle of Gethsemane. There at last His feet touch the earth as He ascends to heaven. And ever since those days the mountain burns in the dearest and most sacred memory of man. There are those to whom this seems to be the one value of the external world—to utter the men who have lived and displayed their natures in it. Mere beauty of scenery, mere triumphs of gigantic engineering which have changed the face of the earth, have little charm for them except as they are the background of human history.

This is what makes the Old World richer than the New. It is the absence of association in its bays and headlands, in its rivers and its mountains and its prairies, that makes a sort of vast silence in the enormous West, solemn enough and infinitely impressive, but wholly different from the chorus of voiceful memories that thrills one who lands on the shores across the sea and finds

Each gray old rock a grand historic thing,
Each bright wave boasting it has borne a king,
Undying footprints on each sandy beach,
Each old wave vocal with heroic speech.

1. One great value of this principle of association which clothes the world with the memories of human life, and makes it utter man, is that it constantly asserts the centralness and rightful superiority of man in the world where he lives. The thinker in whom this principle is strong must always hold that man is the centre, that all else on earth exists for him. All human experience seems to testify that, without such a faith as that, man cannot live his best and fullest life. Man is greater than Nature: Nature exists for man—these are truths upon which, thus far at least, in human history has hung man's power of conceiving the sublimest hopes and feeling the most pressing sense of obligation. If ever those truths should be successfully denied and man dislodged from his centralness, all the highest life of man would suffer. That self-respect which lies at the root of all moral struggle and all religion, that self-respect which is what makes credible to the Christian the great Christian revelations of the Divine fatherhood and the Divine redemption, that self-respect which is the real starting-point for true humility, could not be maintained if man's life should be shown to be no more the purpose and interpreter of the rest than the life, say, of the lion or the oak. And the actual preservation of this sense of centralness lies very largely in the way in which man covers the earth with his associations and makes the landmarks of Nature take their best value from the stories which they have to tell of him.

2. Nor is this monumental value which the earth acquires something which comes from a few great exploits that wonderful men have done upon its highest pinnacles of prominence. There is a gradually increasing richness in the earth, to which every man who in the humblest station lives a worthy and a faithful life contributes. The outer world gets the voice of God not only from God directly, but from some Joshua who has spoken it; and the world in which we live becomes vocal with God whenever any man, however obscure, protests against wickedness, or speaks a word of truth or charity. The world is a better place for us to live in to-day, not merely because of the great pattern lives of hundreds who have passed into the heavens and whom we call still by their names, but far more because of the countless, nameless multitude of men and women who have wrought into the very substance of the earth the great, first, simplest words of God: that man is sacred, that duty is possible, that self-sacrifice is sweet, and that love for one's brother is the crown of life. And we ought not to be satisfied until we feel that the hope of doing something by our living to make

the world in a real degree more full of these words for the men who are to follow us, is the noblest and most inspiring ambition that can be set before our soul.

(1) The world is too large for some of us to think of. Let us think about the houses in which we live. How large a part of their influence upon us depends upon this principle of association. Of the walls of a house where much life has been lived, where many experiences have been passed through, might not one say exactly what Joshua said about the stone that he set up in Shechem, 'They have heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto you'? And indeed the parallel goes farther. The words which our household walls have heard from God, and which they are still constantly uttering to us, if only we can hear, are the same words which He had spoken in the presence of the old stones at Shechem, and of which that stone was a perpetual witness to the people. What was the witness of that stone? It was the necessity and the blessing of obedience to God. That was what God had commanded. That was what the people had sworn. That was what the stone had heard and what it bore perpetual witness to afterwards with its silent voice—that not by his own will, but in subjection to a will far greater than his own, the Jew was to occupy this new land and to live the new life which was before him. And not merely this stone, but every monument which had drunk in his nation's history and stood to utter it perpetually, had the same tale to tell. The rock to which Abraham carried up his son and where he stood with the knife ready to complete the dreadful sacrifice; the stone at Bethel where Jacob vowed his vow of consecration; the twelve stones that were set up at Gilgal when the Hebrews crossed dryshod over Jordan—they all told the same story; they all meant the same thing. It was the Jewish truth of covenant. Since God has done this for us we belong to Him, we hereby acknowledge His ownership and give ourselves to His service. In that truth all the land was steeped.

Now think of any house which by long life of some family in it has become monumental. Its walls have other and far deeper values than those for which you or your fathers paid the architects and carpenters when it was first built. Those walls are steeped in truth, and each room speaks it in its own peculiar voice.

It may be that in the house where you live is the room where you were born. That chamber must sometimes speak to you of the mere fact of your life, must say, 'You are,' 'You live,' in such a tone that the wondrousness of life, the blessedness of life, and the tie between all life and Him who is the ever-living and the all-creating One, must proclaim themselves to you. Perhaps there is some room in your house where for the first time you faced the awful mystery of death, where for the first time you watched that slow, sure, irresistible untwisting of the golden cord and saw mortality fade into immortality before your very eyes. Can that room ever be silent to you again? It was there God gave you at once the keenest pain and the sublimest triumph over pain that the human heart can know; there He taught you at once the necessity and the blessedness of submission. Or perhaps there is some room where you yourself went up once and met with death, some Hezekiah chamber where the message seemed to come to you that you must die, and where you prayed to God that you might live, and told Him how you would give the spared life all to Him. Or perhaps there is some solemn room where your new birth came to you, where you fought out the struggle of your soul's life, where at last you knew that, risen as if from very death, you had indeed begun to live not for yourself, but unto Him who died for you and rose again. The rooms where your children have been born, the room where you first found yourself rich, the room where you first found yourself poor, the room of your friendships, the room of your daily bread, all of these, and around them the whole house with its associations of quiet, uneventful, but most significant years—they have all 'heard the voice of the Lord which He spake unto you'; and if you have ears to hear, they all 'bear witness unto you lest you deny your God.'

¶ To W. J. Copeland, his curate at Little-

more, Cardinal Newman wrote thus of his final leave-taking:

'I quite tore myself away, and could not help kissing my bed, and mantelpiece, and other parts of the house. I have been most happy there, though in a state of suspense. And there it has been that I have both been taught my way and received an answer to my prayers.'

(2) The same thing is true of churches. He who has lived deeply in any church connection, he whose church building and whose pew are bound up with the most profound experiences that man can ever undergo, may change his old church for a new, but if he does, it will be a solemn, thoughtful act done only under the stress of duty and true spiritual conviction. The church where he has repented and trusted and grown in grace, the church where he has met Christ, where he has known himself, will be a man's spiritual home, from which only some deepest change can separate him. It may come; for there are demands of duty to one's soul which cut through all associations and compel a man to leave the dearest things behind. But such a change from church to church is wholly different from the flippant and unmeaning changes which show, not so much what the new church maybe hoped to do for the wanderer, as what the deserted church has failed to do.

(3) As we grow in life, the world ought to be becoming to us more and more full of monumental pictures of human nobleness, patience, self-sacrifice, courage, meekness, so that we shall be more and more sure that goodness and heroism are possible for man. It ought to be always more and more full of the recollection of times when we ourselves mounted to enthusiastic faith and earnest resolution and unselfish action, so that it shall be less and less possible for us to hide behind a low conception, a low expectation of ourselves. It ought to grow bright with more and more luminous points that never cease to burn with the memory of some certain experience of the deep, dear love of God. These are the things which men are tempted to doubt and to deny —that it is possible for men to be true and good, that each man is himself bound to goodness and truth, and that God loves us. Believe these really, believe these constantly, and it must be very hard to sin. Blessed is he whose life fills itself with memories on which these truths are graven deep. For him the great wide open plain of life, where his wandering sight and steps seemed lost, narrows itself till he finds himself walking between the shining walls of righteousness along the certain road of duty. Less and less does he seek to wander. Duty, dear for itself and dear for the memories that hallow it, satisfies him and inspires him. The past is to him not a burden, but wings; and when he comes to God at last, it is a whole lifetime rich with accumulated thankfulness that he lays down at the Saviour's feet.

[1] *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, i. 117.

¶ In a review of our past the one thing that gives it coherence, meaning, purpose, is when we regard it as the development in us of a personality, the growth of a soul. One pities the people who forget this: one wonders what their final thoughts will be. Whether we be men or women, let us be sure of this, that there is nothing else worth having or worth developing. And our age, with all its defects and difficulties, is, if we give it and ourselves a chance, a splendid one for the soul. There has been no better for the growth of faith. We have revolutionised all the grounds of faith, upset our old theologies, turned our Bibles inside out, and all this is to find our faith, as the inspiration of our living, more deeply rooted than ever before. And it is life which has taught us this; life, whose vicissitudes have revealed to us the Divine guidance; whose experiences have shown us where the real values, the hidden treasures, lie; life, whose hard fight has thrown us back upon God as our only refuge and strength; life, whose divine character and glorious possibilities have been revealed to us in Jesus Christ, the name which is, and will ever remain, humanity's dearest possession, the soul of its soul.[1]

[1] J. Brierley.

# THE BOOK OF JUDGES

## INTRODUCTION

THE Book of Judges, like the Hexateuch and the Historical Books, is not the work of a single writer, but a compilation drawn from various sources of various dates.

The following are probably the stages by which the Book reached its present form:

(*a*) Stories of the heroes, which had been current on the lips of the people, were committed to writings in more than one version, probably in the early days of the monarchy. Before any of these the Song of Deborah most likely existed in a collection of songs.

(*b*) The stories appear to have been collected to form a book, and provided with short introductory and connecting passages, probably at a time contemporary with the editorial work of JE.

(*c*) After the publication of Deuteronomy, and probably in the first half of the 6th century, this earlier work was taken in hand by an author filled with the spirit of the Deuteronomic school, who enlarged and arranged it on a definite plan framed to illustrate certain historical and religious principles.

(*d*) A later editor in the 5th century expanded this Deuteronomic book by adding to it certain early documents which concerned the period, i. 1-ii. 5, ix., xvi., xvii.-xxi.

(*e*) A futher editorial process followed, introducing fresh additions and expansions, *e.g.* iii. 31.[1]

1. *The Judges.*—Not long after the age of Moses and Joshua with all its blessings, everything was changed. Israel's prosperity had proved its ruin, and gratitude to Jehovah cooled as fast as the memory of His deliverances grew faint. The victors settled down among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Phœnicians, Hivites and Jebusites, without any thought of keeping the ordinances of Moses or the federal bond which was the source of all their strength—the theocratic worship of Jehovah. They took the idolaters' daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to the idolaters' sons, and worshipped the several *Elohim* of each district and valley.

The result was easy to foresee. The disowning of Jehovah meant the destruction of political unity. Now, as this unity constituted the strength of the tribes against the dispossessed nations, the desertion of Jehovah must inevitably be followed by an aggressive and triumphant return of the vanquished. Amorites, Ammonites, Moabites and Philistines, did not let slip the favourable opportunity. Each in turn paid back to the disunited Israelites the injuries received from them. Wherever the tribes drew themselves up for battle, 'the hand of Jehovah was against them,' and their distress was intense. Then from the depth of despair there went up a sigh, the penitent entreaty of some group of believers converted by adversity, raising their suppliant hands to Jehovah. Jehovah, for His children's sake, 'returned to His inheritance,' He 'remembered' them and raised up a man of faith, or simply a man of courage, who delivered the oppressed out of the hand of the spoilers.

[1] G. A. Cooke, *The Book of Judges* (Cambridge Bible), p. xiii, xxiiif.

(1) These deliverers were called in Hebrew *Shophetim*, which is translated into English by the word *Judges*, and the book which tells the stories of their exploits is called the Book of Judges.

The name *Shophetim* is the same as that of the *Suffetes*, who in classical times were the chief magistrates of the Carthaginians, a people of the same race as the Hebrews. The *Shophet* is found more or less everywhere in Semitic institutions, and his counterpart among the Arabs. The name 'Judge' used in the Bible translation is inappropriate, for the *Shophet* is really the very type of the dictator to whom the Bedouins, who dislike dynasties, used to entrust absolute government both civil and military. The title went to the chieftain who commanded the popular choice by his personal ascendancy, his muscular force, or his courage in battle. This was the case with the Edomite princes. It is extremely likely that the *Shophetim*, in Israel, formed an unbroken chain, giving the hegemony now to one tribe, now to another, but never followed by the whole of the theocratic people, among whom deadly rivalries kept up internecine wars till the time of the accession of David.

(2) The authority of the Judges was naturally, from the circumstances of their origin, restricted and local in range, and, in general, extended to just such parts of the nation as were prepared, for their own advantage, to submit to it. It is not improbable that at first it was temporary in duration, and was laid down when the emergency which demanded it was brought to an end. But no doubt such authority, once assumed, was in many cases retained, and the Judges, from being asserters of their country's liberties, came to occupy a position more accurately corresponding to their title, and became magistrates as well as military chiefs. Later there seem to have been Judges who owed their existence to the popular need of some central authority to meet other requirements than that of direction in war.

Most of the external troubles which gave occasion for the activity of the Judges, though represented by the compiler of the Book of Judges as national conflicts, affected, so far as can be gathered from the details given, only a narrow area, and the extent of the region exposed to them determined, for the most part, the limit of the Judge's authority, outside of which he often encountered hostility from his own countrymen. When the Canaanites, headed by Jabin of Hazor, overran the territories of Zebulun and Naphtali, only a few of the other tribes aided the rising under Barak. Gideon, the Manassite leader against the Midianites, though assisted (if the existing account be correct) by Ephraim in the pursuit of them, could disarm the subsequent hostility of the other division of the house of Joseph only by submissive flattery. Jephthah the Gileadite, who defeated Ammon, was actually attacked by the Ephraimites, who were jealous of his independent action. To such instances of callous indifference and envious rivalry must be added others of actual betrayal of Israel's cause under the influence of selfish fears. The city of Meroz, though the nature of its offence is quite unknown, must have been sorely lacking in patriotism to provoke the bitter curse of Deborah (v. 23). The citizens of Succoth and Penuel refused to supply the wants of Gideon's army; and the tribe of Judah delivered the Danite Samson into the hands of the Philistines. Such instances make it clear that, whilst the attacks made upon Israel at this period were desultory and unsystematic, the resistance offered to them was in most cases equally lacking in coherence and combination.

2. *The Book.*—The Book of Judges is full of stirring incidents, of marvellous deeds; but it is not these that will stick in the memory as one closes the Book, but rather the ever-recurring words, resounding in one's ears like the ceaseless roll of the waves upon the seashore: 'The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord . . . and the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies . . . then they cried unto the Lord . . . and he raised them up a saviour.' That is, the purpose of this Book appears to be what theologians call a pragmatic purpose, or what, from the present point of view, may be called an ideal purpose—to teach, not history, but the nature of the dealings of God with Israel; to bring to light, that is, by means of a frag-

mentary record of events, the method of God's inner converse with man.

The compiler's constant endeavour is to show his brethren of the chosen race what God had done for them in the past, what He was doing for them in the present, what He would do for them in the future; and how they had acted, were acting, or should act under it all. Possessed and governed by this purpose, which is one so high and noble that we feel that beside it nothing else much matters, he is not always careful about details, he sometimes sees events in what we may call a faulty perspective and an unnatural light—a light that deepens and exaggerates the shadows, a perspective that blends into one mass objects that are really distinct, and brings the distance nearer in appearance than it is in fact. For instance, he is not particular as to dates. Forty years, *i.e.*, roughly speaking, a generation, is the regular period by which he measures the rest that follows on oppression, and which he uses, not to furnish a strict chronology, but as a simple device for breaking up his story and marking its stages.

Then the history of God's dealings with Israel had taught him the great truth that for the people properly to discharge its peculiar mission of upholding and fostering the worship of the one true God, it must itself be one in heart and one in action. He knew that if a single member of the tribes that went to form that united nation fell away from Jehovah, the unity of the whole would be imperilled, and the knowledge of its God obscured. And when, with this conviction in his mind, he comes upon an early account of a single act of disloyalty, such as the establishment of Baalberith for their god by the Israelite dwellers in Shechem (viii. 33), he treats it as a general defection of the whole nation.

The Book consists of three parts—

Part I. (i.—ii.5) gives an account of the conditions prevailing immediately after the death of Joshua, when the several tribes had still a certain amount of fighting to do in order to secure themselves in their possessions. This part may be looked upon as a kind of introduction to the rest of the Book. Though it opens with the words 'After the death of Joshua' it is probable that in one place, at least, it refers back to what took place in Joshua's lifetime; for the account of the angel's rebuke at Bochim (ii. 1-5) represents the people as still in the neighbourhood of Gilgal, where the fortified camp was constructed immediately after the crossing of the Jordan; and in the sixth verse Joshua is represented as dismissing the people, while in the eighth verse his death is recorded.

Part II. (ii. 6—xvi.) is the section which is more strictly occupied with the accounts of the Judges. Of these there are thirteen in all. The exploits of seven of them—Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, and Samson—are recorded at greater or less length; but of the remaining six—Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon—very little is known, and they have sometimes been designated 'the minor judges.'

Part III. (xvii.—xxi.) is of the nature of an appendix, and contains two narratives which illustrate the condition of Israel during the time of which the book treats. The first is the story of Micah and his idols (xvii., xviii.); the second that of the Levite and his concubine (xix. to end). The latter story includes the account of the war between Israel and Benjamin and the rape of the maidens of Shiloh.

3. *The value of the Book.*—Probably no book in the Bible surpasses the Book of Judges in varied interest. Scenes the most romantic and the most thrilling pass before us: the lion-hearted Deborah giving her judgments beneath her palm-tree; the splendid muster of tribal chivalry on the plain of Esdraelon; the left-handed Ehud plunging his dagger into the breast of the unsuspecting Eglon; Gideon's brilliant midnight attack on Midian; Sisera lying dead in a tent, slain by the hand of his hostess; the merry vintage festival of the men of Shechem; the crowd of Ephraimites at the fords of the Jordan losing their lives because they cannot say Shibboleth; the grim humour and ludicrous escapade of Samson; the cool effrontery with which the Danites carry off the prized imag

to their new home (xviii. 25); the agony of the victorious Jephthah as his heroic daughter comes forth to meet him with timbrel and dance.

(1) The Book is historically important as showing the fluctuating fortunes of the people, or of the different tribes, before the monarchy. The difficulties of the newcomers in maintaining their position among the older inhabitants is admirably illustrated by the story of Abimelech; the natives resented the authority of one whose mother had been one of themselves, because his father belonged to the hated invaders (ix. 28). But most of all does the Book illustrate the constant danger of attack to which the as yet unconsolidated people were exposed on the north, east, and south.

(2) When we pass from the outward history to study the state of mind, the ethics, the social morality of the Hebrews in this period, the first feeling is one of disappointment. The ethics of the period are crude, very crude. They sweep away all the preconceived notions with which some people open their Bibles. An inspired book, the product of an inspired people, ought, they think, to give us portraits of saints for us to imitate. Maurice's words are worth quoting: 'Are not inspired men to be different from other men? Alas, that we should cut ourselves off from God's great mercy to His creatures for the sake of a participle! Alas, that when He raises up men to teach us what He is and what we are, we should turn round upon Him and say, Thou oughtest to have so constituted these men that they should not have been our teachers, that they should have had no relations with us; otherwise Thou dost not satisfy our notions of what an inspired man should be!'

If, then, we are obliged to note at what a low stage the ethics of Israel stood during this period, the study will be worth while, for it will have two results. Firstly, it will be borne in upon us afresh how wonderful is the guiding power of the Spirit of God, which could evolve out of such unpromising material a nation whose key-word was to be Righteousness—a nation that could produce such high-souled teachers as the Prophets and the Psalmists. And, secondly, it will make us bow our heads in thankfulness that our eyes have been carried even beyond the Prophets and Psalmists to the dazzling height of the perfect Man. By means of the Book of Judges we can draw the true measure of contrast between the character of the saviours of ancient Israel and the character towards which we may strive in union with the Saviour of all men.

The age of the Judges is certainly not one in which we should look for moral examples suitable for Christians to follow. Nevertheless, it has its value (a) in showing the indestructibility of the Divine purpose for Israel; national life and religion were kept alive amidst most unpromising conditions; (b) in portraying splendid examples of decision and courage—the harder virtues, without which, indeed, the finer flowers of character cannot be produced. Love and forbearance can rest only on the foundation of loyalty to truth and hatred of evil.

(3) But for us the Book's chief value is religious. In giving us the traditional accounts of Israelitish history during the period here dealt with, the Book of Judges bears valuable testimony to a great principle, namely, that the well-being of a nation lies in God's succour and protection, and that, accordingly, apostasy, whether national or individual, involves the forfeiture of a claim to God's favour. Sin, repentance, deliverance—these three words summarize for us the main lessons which the Book conveys. However remote the circumstances of life and the temptations to evil conduct, as here set forth, from those which surround and govern our present-day existence, the Book reminds us that God's government of the world is in its nature one and the same, nor is it limited to any particular period or set of conditions. The men raised up to deliver Israel had of necessity the qualities of their times. We find displayed in their story ferocity, waywardness, even gross sensualism. But, as deliverers of their brethren, they yield 'a shadowy outline of the one true Saviour of His people,' though the 'lines, which are so clear and true in Him, are broken, involved, indeterminate, confused in them.'

The outward growth of Israel was strong

and rapid. It developed from scattered groups of nomads into a national unity under a king. In ethics and social morality the people stood on a low level, the highest virtue they knew being devotion to tribe and clan and family. Their religion also was in an elementary state, but it had within it the seeds of development, and the seeds had begun to germinate. It was still hampered by relics of archaic superstitions, and still badly hampered by the surrounding Canaanite practices. But, for all that, Jehovah was duly worshipped with images and altars, with joyous sacrificial feasts, and with solemn burnt-offerings; and these were offered all over the country, by men of any tribe. And two important changes were in progress. Externally, a body of priests was growing up, into whose hands all ritual would gradually fall. Internally there was a far more momentous change in the conceptions of Jehovah Himself. He was not only the Baal of the land, and the Man of War, and the King of His people, but He was a Spiritual Being who would reveal Himself only in temporary and partial manifestations, and whose real Name and Nature were unfathomable.

But from that time onwards He allowed men slowly to fathom farther the depths. They learnt, as the later editor of the Book insists, that He was a God who could not rightly be worshipped with stone pillars and tree stumps and images. They learnt from the Prophets that He was a God of holiness and love, who was equally concerned with all nations. Until at last, through Him who was the true Lord, Champion, King and Priest, He revealed the fullness of the Godhead, the Name that is above every name.

## Consultative Prayer.

Judg. i. 1.—'Now after the death of Joshua, it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?'

The Conquest was over, but the upheaving of the conquered population still continued. The ancient inhabitants, like the Saxons under the Normans, still retained their hold on large tracts, or important positions throughout the country. The neighbouring powers still looked on the new-comers as an easy prey to incursion and devastation, if not to actual subjugation. Against these enemies, both from without and from within, but chiefly from within, a constant struggle had to be maintained, with all the dangers, adventures, and trials incident to such a state—a war of independence such as was not to occur again till the struggle of the Maccabees against the Greek kings, or that of the last insurgents against the Romans. A glance at the first chapter of the Book of Judges will show in a moment the motley, parti-coloured character which Palestine must have presented after the death of Joshua. Nearly the whole of the sea-coast, all the strongholds in the rich plain of Esdraelon, and, in the heart of the country, the invincible fortress of Jebus, were still in the hands of the unbelievers. Every one of these spots was a focus of disaffection, a bone of contention, a natural field of battle.

And Israel was divided. Joshua was one of the three men who made Israel a nation. Under his leadership the wanderers of the desert, full of tribal jealousies, and hitherto little accustomed to concerted action, were compacted into a body sufficiently united and powerful to be more than a match for the forces of the Canaanites. But he left no successor to command the obedience of all Israel; nor, indeed, under the new conditions in which the people found itself, was its comprehension under a single head as yet feasible. Even during Joshua's lifetime certain of the tribes acted independently of him; and when he passed away, such combination as his military operations enforced tended to disappear and give place to a narrow and self-assertive tribal spirit, as the different sections separated to appropriate their respective acquisitions. And this proneness to a self-regarding policy was aggravated in the case of some by the situation in which they were placed in consequence of the imperfect subjugation of the country. The nascent sentiment of nationalism drooped when the outlying tribes, on the one hand saw themselves menaced by strong Canaanite fortresses, and on the other felt

themselves attracted by the luxurious Canaanite civilization. Of the weakness which this partly inevitable, partly self-chosen, isolation produced the surrounding communities quickly took advantage, the vanquished Canaanites trying to regain the soil they had lost, and the Ammonites and Moabites, as well as the desert tribes (like Midian), seeking to share the territory which their Israelite kindred had won. Nevertheless, in spite of heathen seduction and heathen assaults, neither the purer faith and morality inseparable from the religion of Jehovah nor the consciousness of national claims due to a common ancestry was altogether quenched. In the day of their necessity 'they asked the Lord.'

1. 'They asked the Lord.' They would not have asked the Lord if they had not been what they were, the children of Israel. Character is implied; character is not only implied, it is recognized and held up as a lesson. They belonged to a praying host, to a covenanted ancestry, they were involved in the baptism of an oath. Do not imagine that a man can leap out of atheism and begin to pray for some selfish purpose, and have his answer on the spot. Character determines prayer; the simple heart suggests the right petition; the sincere spirit, praying at the Cross and in the name of Christ, can alone pray with lasting and ennobling effect. In this respect there is something in heredity, there is something in the covenant, something in the eternal decree.

¶ He began early and continued to the end that habit of what we may call 'consultative' prayer, which is the joy and strength only of those who have passed into the inmost shrine of fellowship with God, and there remain at home and in peace.[1]

2. 'They asked the Lord.' They did not dictate to Him. Prayer is not dictation; prayer is not always even suggestion; and when prayer is suggestion it is offered with halting breath and with a most reverent faith, lest a suggestion should be not only a sophism but an expression of selfishness. God does permit us to say what we would like; He is so condescendingly gentle that He sometimes asks us what we would like to have, and when we have told Him He oftentimes says, No.

¶ Prayer on the human side is man's declared alliance with the Infinite. It is the sap in us, all the warm life-current in us, rising past every intermediate object of desire to our very topmost, and thence streaming out to meet that higher Beyond of which it knows itself a part. For we know ourselves not as a finished product, but rather as a process, a becoming, and in prayer we seek the element which is making us.

It is in this conception we finally meet the objection, absurd in itself, of prayer being the dictation of weakness and ignorance to the all-governing wisdom. The objection ignores the whole system of things in this world. It supposes that man's prayer begins with man, whereas nothing in man begins with him. It began first in his universe, in his Maker. It is as the action of sun and rain. From out of the ocean the sun draws up the vapours, which later come back in showers upon the earth. Here is a circulation from deep to height, and from height again to deep. So, under the shining of the Sun behind the sun, out of the deeps of man's mind and heart are carried up the invisible currents of his aspiration and soul's desire, to descend afterwards in secret responses which he knows, nevertheless, to be real. Real, though the first form of his desire is often enough left unanswered. The response lies, indeed, often enough in the heightening and purification of his desire. In Gethsemane's agony he prays, maybe, for his cup to pass from him. He leaves the garden with no other wish than that God's will be done.[1]

3. 'They asked the Lord.' And they held back nothing of all the circumstances. They asked for guidance, but they took the opportunity of laying the whole case before Him. Do not keep anything from God. You know perfectly well that you cannot keep anything from His omniscience; that is not the meaning of the exhortation; the meaning rather is, Tell God everything as if He had never heard

[1] W. D. Mackenzie, *John Mackenzie of South Africa*, 7.

[1] J. Brierley.

it, go and tell Jesus. The Christ, of course, knows all that has happened, He has seen every drop of the trickling blood, He has heard every groan of the suffering man, He knows all you can tell Him and infinitely more, and yet He so knows the human heart that He says in effect, Now, poor broken one, tell Me all about it: how was it, how did it begin, how did it proceed, and what is the end of the tragedy? Prithee, sit down in the presence of the King, and tell Him the story. This is the condescension of God, this is the great comfort and strength of the Almighty, that He allows us to cry in His presence, and that He puts our tears in His bottle.

¶ 'I wish you would tell me exactly what you feel about prayer, Father. I never quite understand. You always speak as if it played a great part in your life, and yet I never am sure what exactly it means to you.'

'You might as well say,' he said, smiling, 'that you never felt quite sure what breakfast meant to me.'

He stopped and looked at me for a moment. 'Do we know what anything *means?* We know what prayer is, at any rate—one of the commonest and most natural of instincts. What is your difficulty?'

'Oh, the usual one,' I said, 'that if the God to whom we pray is the Power which puts into our minds good desires, and knows not only what is passing in our thoughts, but the very direction which our thoughts are going to take—reads us, in fact, like a book, as they say—what, then, is the object or purpose of setting ourselves to pray to a Power that knows our precise range of thoughts, and can disentangle them all far better than we can ourselves?'

'Why,' said Father Payne, 'that is pure fatalism. If you carry that on a little further it means all absence of effort. You might as well say, "I will take no steps to provide myself with food—if God is All-Powerful, and sends me a good appetite, it is His business to satisfy it!" '

'Oh,' I said, 'I see that. But if I set about providing myself with breakfast, I know exactly what I want, and have a very fair chance of obtaining it. But the essence of prayer is that you must not expect to get your desires fulfilled.'

'I certainly do not pretend,' said he, 'that prayer is a mechanical method of getting things; it isn't a *substitute* for effort and action. Nor do I think that God simply withholds things unless you ask for them, as a dog has to beg for a piece of biscuit. I don't look upon prayer as the mere formulating of a list of requests. . . . Prayer seems to me just a mingling of hope and desire and love and confidence. It is more like talking over your plans and desires with God. It all depends upon whether you say, "My will be done," which is the wrong sort of prayer, or 'Thy will be done," which is the right sort of prayer, and infinitely harder. I don't mind telling you this, that my prayers are an attempt to put myself in touch with the Spirit of God. I believe in God; I believe that He is trying very hard to bring men and women to live in a certain way—the right, joyful, beautiful way. He sees it clearly enough; but we are so tangled up with material things that we don't see it clearly—we don't see where our happiness lies; we mistake all kinds of things —pleasures, schemes, successes, comforts, desires—for happiness; and prayer seems to me like opening a sluice and letting a clear stream gush through. That's why I believe one must set oneself to it. The sluice is not always open—we are lazy, cowardly, timid; or again, we are confident, self-satisfied, proud of our own inventiveness and resourcefulness. I don't know what the will is or what its limitations are; but I believe it has a degree of liberty, and it can exercise that liberty in welcoming God. Of course, if we think of God as drearily moral, harsh, full of anger and disapproval, we are not likely to welcome Him; but if we feel Him full of eagerness and sympathy, of "comfort, light, and fire of love," as the old hymn says, then we desire His company . . .'

'Then with you prayer isn't a process of asking?' I said. 'But isn't it a way of changing yourself by simply trying to get your ideals clear?'

'No, no,' said Father Payne; 'it's just drawing water from a well when you are

thirsty. Of course you must go to the well, and let down the bucket. It isn't a mere training of imagination; it is helping yourself to something actually there. The more you pray, the less you ask for definite things. You become ashamed to do that. Do you remember the story of Hans Andersen, when he went to see the King of Denmark? The King made a pause at one point and looked at Andersen, and Andersen said afterwards that the King had evidently expected him to ask for a pension. "But I could not," he said. "I know I was a fool, but my heart would not let me." One can trust God to know one's desires, and one's heart will not let one ask for them. It is His will that you want to know—your own will that you want to surrender. Strength, clear-sightedness, simplicity—those are what flow from contact with God.'[1]

## Requital.

Judg. i. 7.—'As I have done, so God hath requited me.'

This is the *lex talionis*, or law of requital. It is often proclaimed in Scripture; 1 Sam. xv. 33, 'As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women'; Judg. xv. 11, 'As they [the Philistines] did unto me, so have I [Samson] done unto them'; Jer. li. 56, 'The Lord God of recompences shall surely requite thee'; Exod. xviii. 11, 'For the thing wherein they sinned came upon them.'

The words were uttered by Adoni-bezek (king of Bezek). He had conquered seven of the little kingdoms in and around Palestine, and he showed their kings the rough hospitality of cutting off their thumbs and their great toes, and of allowing them to gather their meat under his table. In due time, however, Judah, who succeeded Joshua in the leadership, went up to do the Lord's work and took with him Simeon that they might fight against the Canaanites. In Bezek they slew ten thousand men. There they found the king and fought against him; and when he fled they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. 'And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me.' This fact is an illustration of a severe yet most holy law. 'The Lord God of recompences shall surely requite.' Nor was it an ancient law only; it was repeated by Jesus Christ Himself: 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' The same doctrine was laid down by the Apostles: 'He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.'

¶ In Greek theology this punishment of like by like is called 'the retribution of Neoptolemus,' who murdered Priam at an altar, and was himself murdered at an altar (Pausan. v. 17, 3). The fate of Phalaris, burnt in his own brazen bull (Ovid, *De Art. Am.* i. 653), and of Dionysius (Ælian, *Var. Hist.* ix. 8), were also prominent illustrations of the law. We must not suppose that this Canaanite prince worshipped Jehovah, but only that he recognized generally that a Divine retribution had overtaken him. It is one of the commonest facts of history that

> Even-handed justice
> Commends the ingredients of the poisoned chalice
> To our own lips.[1]

1. Set it down as a central and abiding truth that wrong-doers cannot escape Divine judgment. 'Be not decieved; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' A man may deny this; he may theoretically disregard it; but all history shows that he cannot escape it. At the heart of things is the spirit of judgment. Life appears to be confused, but before the Almighty it has shape and plan and purpose. God overtakes a man at the last, and comes before him with such vividness of action as to constrain the man himself to admit that the punishment is Divine and not human. There is an answering voice in the human heart to the marvellous law in life whose watchword is: 'Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth!' 'As thy sword hath made women

[1] A. C. Benson, *Father Payne*, 362ff.

[1] F. W. Farrar, in C. J. Ellicott's *Commentary*, ii. 172.

childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women.'

¶ One of the finest cartoons drawn for *Punch* by the pen of Bernard Partridge is entitled 'Wilful Murder?' The Kaiser is seated by a table, leaning back in his chair. One hand is laid on the hilt of his sword; the other is stretched aloft, holding a brimming goblet. He has just commenced in the words of that historic German toast—'TO THE DAY——.' But, at his elbow, unseen hitherto by him, stands the gaunt figure of Death. He too holds aloft in his right hand a goblet stretched out towards a gibbet with its dangling rope in readiness erected not far away. The bony fingers of the spectre's left hand are clutching the wrist of the Kaiser's outstretched arm, and, with stern gaze fixed on the culprit, he fills in the rest of the sentence—'OF RECKONING.' [1]

2. The law does not operate in one direction only. The God who punishes also rewards. 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.' 'The liberal soul shall be made fat.' 'Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.' This is the other side of the law which is full of awful suggestion. The way of the Lord is thus equal. Nothing that we do for Him or for His cause goes without reward. Whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, shall be surprised by the approbation of Heaven, and amazed at the degree in which every simple deed of duty or love is magnified by the Judge of the whole earth. But we must not work merely for the sake of a reward, for then the process would end only in disappointment. It is possible to do good deeds with a selfish hand. If a man shall set himself to convert the whole world, simply in order that he may secure heaven at last, all his efforts will be thrown away and he himself will be cast into outer darkness. The reason is plain. There is no similarity between the motive and the action; they are not only not co-ordinate, they do not belong to the same universe; they can be regarded only as abortive and pitiful attempts to serve God and mammon. Where the motive is right the good deed is always its own reward. We realize heaven in the doing of it. No man ever yet relieved the necessities of poverty without himself being abundantly fed and satisfied by the very act of benevolence. A very curious law is this, yet it is a law proved by innumerable instances, and not a single instance to the contrary can be quoted in modification, much less in disproof. It would appear as if eyes were watching us from heaven, noting all the way that we take and all the deeds that we do, as if instantly some communication were set in motion by which our hearts are encouraged and refreshed immediately upon the accomplishment of every good deed. Hence come our holiest raptures, our sublimest ecstasies, the enthusiasms which lift us into the gladness of heaven. Hence, too, comes that sweet content which never fails to crown the day's labour done by the hands of the good man. If we would know how happy human life can be, how like God's own life, peaceful with the very quiet of heaven, let us go about doing good, and thus imitate the Son of God.

¶ 'The riches which God has given me,' said George Moore, the philanthropist, 'may, if rightly used, be a blessing to many; but, if otherwise, they may only prove a curse and a snare.' He did not take so much pleasure in giving as in doing. What he gave, he gave with fellow-feeling and sympathy. One of his maxims was, 'Sympathy is the great secret of life.' At Kilhow he said, 'If the world only knew half the happiness that a man has in doing good, he would do a great deal more. We are only here for a time, and ought to live as we would wish to die.' [1]

¶ The pleasure of doing good is the only one that does not wear out.[2]

[1] J. W. W. Moeran, *Illustrations from the Great War*, 43.

[1] S. Smiles, *George Moore*, 182.

[2] Chinese Proverb.

## God's Inability.

Judg. i. 19.—'And the Lord was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.'

THE text tells us of the inability of God. Judah was prosperous in the hill-country, and that was taken as evidence that their God was with them; but even with His presence they could not prevail in the valley, because their opponents had chariots of iron. For centuries the Hebrews did not use chariots, and in the hill-country the chariots of their enemies were of no use. Once down in the plain, however, the chariots counted even against men who felt quite certain God was with them. The text belongs to an age when theology was very crude, and when men judged by what we should now deem false standards. But this is still true—that bad men can build iron chariots to fight against God, and can, within certain limits, secure large victories.

1. Why did the Canaanites ever win?

(1) *Because God was not with Judah.*—Some have asserted that this verse says that the Lord could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley; yet the antecedent is not God at all, but Judah. It is Judah that could not drive them out. 'Well,' they say, 'but God was with Judah, and they did drive out the people of the mountain: why could they not drive out the people of the plain by the same power?' This is the hinge of the matter. They did not conquer the men of the iron chariots because in that business God was not with them. As far as their faith went, so far God kept touch with them, and they could do anything and everything; but when they despondingly thought that they could not drive out the inhabitants of the wide valleys, then they failed utterly. They were afraid because of the chariots. These had poles between the horses armed with lances which cut their way through the crowd, and the axles of the wheels were fitted with great scythes. Such inventions were novel and caused a panic; therefore the men of Judah lost their faith in God, and became weak and cowardly. They said, 'It is of no use; we cannot meet these terrible machines'; and they did not pray, or make any attempt to meet the foe. They could not drive out the people. Of course they could not. If they had exhibited the same faith about the chariots of iron as about the hill-men, the chariots of iron would have been no better than chariots of straw; for the Lord 'breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.' If they had believed in God, and had gone forth in His Name, the horses would soon have fled, as indeed they did when God gave His people faith. When Barak led the way with Deborah, then they smote Jabin, who had nine hundred chariots of iron. They fled; they fled; they hasted away, for the Lord was with Barak, and gave them up to him as chaff to the whirlwind. God would have been with Judah if Judah had displayed faith; but, having no faith, they could not rout the chariots of iron.

(2) *Because Judah had too much faith in themselves.*—If God has to give the victory, then chariots of iron or chariots of fire are of no avail against an omnipotent God. The men of Judah evidently thought that there was somewhat in themselves; for their power went as far as smiting the men of the hills, but not so far as attacking the cavalry in the open plain, where there was room for them to rush to and fro. Now, that is your weakness and mine. We tacitly imply that God can help us up to a certain point. Does not that mean that we can help ourselves up to that point? Being interpreted, the belief conceals a measure of self-trust; and the next akin to self-trust is distrust. If you have passed out of yourself, where have you entered now? Into the Infinite. The man who has reached the Infinite needs not to reckon any longer. It was of no use for Noah to keep a log of his vessel when there remained no shore: when it was all sea, it did not matter to him where he drifted. And so when we once get right away from self there are no limits. God is unbounded: therefore trust Him without stint. Act like Samson, the strong, because the childlike, hero. There is a Philistine to meet: he is ready for him. There are two

of them: he is quite ready for both. There are twenty of them: it makes no difference. A thousand of them are before him: there are only the more for the hero to kill, for he will slay every mother's son of them. Numbers do not matter. 'But, Samson, if you are to do this deed, you must wield a good Damascus blade.' 'Yes,' says he, 'if I am to do it, of course I must; but if the Lord is to do it, the jawbone of an ass will suffice.' When Samson had thrown himself simply and nakedly upon God, it made no difference to him whether foes were few or many, whether weapons were fit or feeble. Herein is the failure of our faith, if it rests not in God's bare arm. See this round world, how steadily it turns! how smoothly it moves along in its predestined course! Why? Because God has hung it upon nothing, and God's own will directs it. Though a saint is sustained by nothing but the power of God, all the devils in hell cannot stir him. The bare arm of God is the source of all power.

¶ On my first visit to Japan I spent a memorable morning with one of the greatest missionaries of modern times, Dr. Greene. I asked him some thirty or forty questions, and wrote down quite fully his answers. Were I at liberty to print them, it would constitute a really wonderful document. The last question I asked him was: 'Dr. Greene, what is the greatest thought you have ever had, judged by its effects on yourself, and, so far as you can tell, on others through you?' He reflected quite a while and then replied, 'If I may express it in the language of the writer of the Psalm—"The Lord is at my right hand . . ."' If the Lord is, as He unquestionably is, at the right hand of each one whose heart is right toward Him, then there can be no such thing as loneliness, no such thing as discouragement, no such thing as defeat, no such thing as atrophy or want of vitality, and, therefore, no such thing as unproductivity or small spiritual results. In conscious relation to the Living Christ, the Fountain-Head of spiritual energy and vitality, lies the deep but open secret of abundant life, abounding service, and undying influence.[1]

[1] J. R. Mott.

(3) *Because they believed one promise of God and did not believe another.*—There is a kind of faith which is strong in one direction, but utterly weak if tried in other ways. It is curious that persons generally pick out the promises easiest to believe, while those that are greater, and therefore more godlike, they cannot believe. Judah believed in smiting the hill-men, because he thought such warfare easy; but as to overcoming the cavalry with their chariots of iron, that was difficult, and so he did not believe up to that mark. Beware of being pickers and choosers of God's promises. Traders know how customers will turn all the stock over, and keep on picking over packet after packet, and never buy anything at the end. When people pick the promises over they say—'That one? No, I cannot receive that.' When they do believe a promise, it is the smallest in the book. Oh! for a faith that takes the promises in the bulk, and knows nothing of choosing or refusing. Whatsoever God has promised He is able also to perform; and if the promise be suitable to my case, I am to grasp it and expect to see it fulfilled.

¶ Much faith is temporary. It is not unlike the faith mentioned in Æsop's fable, when the stag stood looking into the water at his branching antlers, and tossing his head with defiance. 'Why,' said he, 'am I afraid of the hounds? A dog come near me? Impossible! If the hound does but see my horns he will fear death. I shall rip him up or dash him to pieces. I will let the pack see what I am made of.' Just then there was heard a bark, and away went the stag like lightning, as terrified as ever. How like to us. We appear to be so grandly strong, so quietly believing; yet the first trouble that comes scatters our courage. That is the reason why Judah could not drive out the dwellers in the plain: they heard the rushing of those chariots of iron, and their hearts failed them.[1]

2. But God's inability (which is man's and not God's) has its limits.

(1) There are times of degeneration, but degeneration cannot undo all progress; there is a limit to the receding movement. Great

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

forces seem to guard certain points and safeguard society from coming back beyond them. There can be very serious and mischievous reactions, but the worst of them is limited. Something in the world's life says to evil at a certain point, 'Thus far, but no farther.' If man's freedom is a self-accepted limitation on the part of God to secure reality to the individual will, so, too, the reality of the Divine Life gives its limit to sin, and their boundaries to the forces of destruction. That is one thing God is doing—limiting the power of evil.

¶ The Power which called man into being, itself rises up in man against the wrongs in the world. The voice of the moral consciousness, approving the good, condemning evil, and striving to annul it, is the voice of God, and has therefore supreme authority. We err, therefore, in thinking that it is the weakness of man which is matched against the might of evil in the world, and that we are fighting a losing battle. It is an incomplete, abstract, untrue view of the facts of life which puts God as irresistible Power in the outer world, and forgets that the same irresistible Power works under the higher form of love, in the human heart.

Is not God now i' the world His power first made?
Is not His love at issue still with sin,
Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?
Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around? [1]

(2) Another striking fact in the world's history is that, in spite of all the evil, it is growing better: humanity sweeps onward. The course of evolution has not been a uniform and unbroken rise, but it has been a rise—a grand and glorious rise. The darkness of present conditions does not make us believe that this ascent has suddenly stopped. The clouds are thick about us, but we are still climbing the hill. If the wrongs of history make men ask, What has God been doing? let the fact of magnificent progress in spite of all the wrongs be a part of the answer. And another part of the answer is this: that the progress has often been made, not only in spite of, but by means of, the wrongs themselves. There is some subtle weaving done in the looms of time. Such crimes have been made to serve high results that we despair nothing of the Higher Government of this world. What has God been doing? He has been bringing good out of evil right along the centuries.

¶ Civilization, like humanity itself, is in process of evolution. Not in a month or a year does the ape or tiger die. We are climbing an endless ladder, and the rung which we grasp with our hands to-day will be under our feet to-morrow. And this ladder of progress rises, be it noted, in the form of a *spiral*, so that when we seem to have returned to the same point and retrograded, we are in reality higher up—on a higher plane. Our growing sensitivity to, and impatience of, defects in the social organism, is the strongest proof we could have of real progress.[1]

[1] H. Jones, *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, 248.

## Bochim.

Judg. ii. 5.—'And they called the name of that place Bochim.'

THE possession of Canaan was the great national hope of the Israelites, to which they looked forward as the end of all their trials. In the wilderness, when enduring the hardships and privations of their unsettled life, they had doubtless often comforted themselves with the thought of the rest and fruition that should be theirs when once they entered the beautiful land whither they were bound. In their dreams its cultivated fields stretched out in green beauty, contrasting strikingly with the arid wastes they were painfully traversing. Visions of cool, cloudy skies that distilled the dew and the gentle rain on leafy trees and brilliant flowers rose up before their imagination when the sun of the desert poured down its scorching rays on the burning sands and there was no shadow from the oppressive glare. In the parched silence of the wilderness the streams of the far-off country of their hopes would murmur with a refreshing sound to their inner ear. And when the manna lay

[1] D. Watson, *The Heritage of Youth*, 3.

white like hoar-frost on the ground around their tents in the mornings, until they loathed the insipid food, they pictured to themselves the yellow cornfields and the purple vineyards that were fairer and richer than those which their fathers had seen on the banks of the Nile. The land flowing with milk and honey was to them all that Eden was to our first parents. There they would rest under their own vine and fig-tree with none to make them afraid. There all their privations would be compensated with abundance; all their hardships and trials would be forgotten in a blissful sense of repose. Permanent, undisturbed possession of all the material resources of the land would leave not a care to disturb their ease, nor a want unsatisfied.

So they dreamed. But widely different did they find the reality. When they first came in sight of the Holy Land, when they stood on its border and looked across on its rich and varied scenery, its lofty hills and its fertile valleys, and the spies brought back the glowing account of its beauty and richness, and showed them the wonderful samples of its fruits in the grapes of Eshcol, they found to their dismay that they were not to get such quiet and immediate possession of it as they had hoped. They fancied that all they had to do was merely to go in, and the way would be opened up before them without let or hindrance. Great, therefore, was their disappointment and their terror when they were told that the land was occupied by fierce and warlike races, its fields cultivated by a people further advanced in the arts of life than they were; and its commanding heights studded with towns and villages great and walled up to heaven. The Canaanites were prepared to fight for their fields and hearths to the uttermost, and to dispute with the utmost vigour every inch of the ground. Only by the force of arms, only by superior skill and bravery, could the Israelites wrest their possessions from the aborigines, and supplant them in the land. Their history for many years would run on in blood. It would be long ere the dread vintage of war would give place to the peaceful vintage of the grape. The siege of Jericho, the defeat at Ai, the battle of Bethhoron—many an awful fight would be fought, and many a fearful massacre passed through, and many a weary toil and trial endured ere they would obtain full possession of the Holy Land. No wonder that such a rude shock to their dreams of ease and pleasure should have stricken them to the very heart, and caused this great national mourning which has immortalized the memory of Bochim.

1. The Israelites needed to be taught the great lesson that every advantage, instead of being an end whereon to rest, ought to be a stimulus to renewed effort, a higher vantage-ground for enlarged acquisition. Canaan was merely an episode in their wandering life as a nation. It was to do for them in a nobler form what the wilderness life had done for them in a lower form. They were to be trained by the more settled conditions of their cultivated fields and walled cities, as they had been trained by the unsettled camp life of the desert. As they had gone into the Holy Land a wiser and nobler race than they left Egypt, so they should go out of the Holy Land a still more educated and disciplined nation to benefit mankind by the results of their discipline. Like Abraham, their father and founder, whose life was one long pilgrimage, they should be a nation of pilgrims, having nowhere a continuing city, halting awhile in Canaan as they had halted awhile in each of the stations of the desert, and seeking through it all the 'city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' And though the learning of that lesson eclipsed many bright earthly hopes, and brought with it many bitter tears, it was worth while to have learnt it. Their tears washed their eyes clearer and their hearts purer. They saw deeper into the teachings of Providence, and farther into the experiences and destinies of life. They knew, as they had never known before, that Joshua had not given them rest when he had given them the possession of Canaan, that there still remained a rest for the people of God—a rest that, like the horizon, receded the nearer they got to it, a rest that was to be obtained only by resolute struggle and noble endurance, and faithful perseverance unto the end.

2. And just as Bochim was one of the neces-

sary incidents in the history of the Israelites, so is it a necessary incident in the life of every individual. Some time or other there comes to each of us a revelation such as the Israelites had and a revulsion of feeling such as they suffered from. There is no life that has not its illusions and disenchantments, its stern awakenings and its bitter lessons. Every young person looks forward to the future as the Israelites looked forward to Canaan. They surround the period of maturity, when they shall be grown-up men and women, with a halo of joy. At present they are under constraint and discipline. They are at school, learning tasks which are not joyous but grievous. They think more of the restraints and privations of their education than of its advantages. Life is narrowed all round by fences; and they can only get glimpses through the bars of a fullness of enjoyment for which they crave. In these circumstances they long for a larger life. They think that when they are done with school and cross the threshold of the grander world to which school-life leads they will have a good time, that life will be to them one long holiday. But when at length they grow up and enter upon the active pursuits of life, they find, to their sore disappointment, that their dreams have been illusions. Instead of ease and enjoyment they have anxiety and trouble. They find that existence is a struggle with difficulties, that each day brings new trials and new cares, that their powers must be ever braced for active work and patient endurance. The discovery is a Bochim; and the young, inexperienced heart in this its first contact with the hard facts and circumstances of life, receives a trying shock. The days of youth, which seemed so tiresome and confined when they were lived through, now glow with a radiance and a freedom that contrast strikingly with the dullness and bondage of the present.

¶ In youth the spirit expands like an opening rose, and things heard and seen strike upon the senses with an incredible novelty and freshness, hinting at all sorts of sweet surprises, joyful secrets, hopeful mysteries. . . . Alas, as the days move on and the crisis delays, as life brings the need of labour, the necessity of earning money, as love and friendship lose their rosy glow and settle down into comfortable relations, the disillusionment spreads and widens. I do not say that the nearer view of life is not more just, more wholesome, more manly. It is but the working of some strictly determined law. The dreams fade, become unreal and unsubstantial; though not rarely, in some glimpse of retrospect, the pilgrim turns, ascends a hillock by the road, and sees the far-off lines, the quiet folds, of the blue heights from which he descended in the blithe air of the morning, and knows that they were desirable. Perhaps the happiest of all are those who, as the weary day advances, can catch a sight of some no less beautiful hills ahead of him, their hollows full of misty gold, where the long journey may end; and then, however wearily the sun falls on the dusty road and the hedged fields to left and right, he knows that the secrets of the earlier day are beautiful secrets still, and that the fine wonder of youth has yet to be satisfied.[1]

3. But a sadder Bochim is that which comes to the young convert of religion. Life at the time of conversion is a peculiarly beautiful and happy thing. It is sanctified by the blessing of the Lord and sweetened by the Divine love that fills the heart. The heavenly enchanter's touch has turned everything to gold; the newly acquired joy of the Lord has, by its magic influence, made all feelings and possessions new, and transfigured the most familiar scenes and the most commonplace incidents and occupations. But soon comes the inevitable reaction, the fading of the magic rose-hues into the common light of day, the return to ordinary ways and habits. The young convert expects the Christian life to be an heroic thing. He looks forward to living on the heights of spirituality, where he will breathe a keener air, be removed above the evils of the lower world and be transfigured by the Divine light. He finds Christian life to be only the ordinary human life, lived on low levels, and amid all the commonplace relations and circumstances of dull, prosaic society. He finds it made up of petty trials

[1] A. C. Benson, *The Silent Isle*, 104.

and duties, and small experiences, with nothing calling for high impulses or glowing enthusiasms or wonderful sacrifices. He realizes to his dismay that the religion of the Cross is a religion of hardship and difficulties, of trial and sorrow. Christianity is not an easy thing when it is something more than a profession, something higher than a name, something truer than a creed. When it becomes a life and a power it is from that moment a fight, a struggle, a discipline. There is a great company leagued against the Christian. Spiritualities of wickedness lurk about his path, are ambushed in his very thoughts. There are evil principles within himself which he must oppose—the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life. There are evil principles at work in the world against which he must contend. There are fightings innumerable without, and fears unceasing within. And, finding the elements of his training thus as stern and hard as ever, nay, more so, because he is now rowing against the stream instead of idly drifting with it, no wonder that he should sometimes despair.

¶ What do we risk in serving Him? We should go on doing whatever is right and innocent as hitherto; we should have much the same duties to fulfil, and the same troubles to bear patiently; but in addition we should have the infinite consolation of loving that which is above all worthy of our love, of toiling and suffering to please a true and perfect Friend, who takes heed of everything, however small, and who rewards all sacrifice a hundredfold, even in this life, by the peace with which He fills the heart. And lastly, we must add the prospect of an eternal and blessed life, in comparison with which all here is but as slow as death.[1]

4. Now what is the design of this peculiar sorrow that comes upon us when we find that the goal of our hope is not the goal of rest or of full satisfaction? Why is Bochim placed at the threshold of every new and larger experience of life? Why is it associated with fulfilled desire and assured possession, with great increase of knowledge, with a deeper comprehension of the mysteries of Nature and of life? Some say that we have this sadness because life is all a failure. We were deluded before and we were happy; our eyes are now open and we see things as they truly are, and therefore this depression and gloom have come over us. Life can never be the same to us again, because the mask has fallen off it, and we know it for what it is—vanity and vexation of spirit. But can we believe for a moment that a wise and loving God, who has done all things well for His creatures, and has given to them His own Son to share and redeem their lot, meant that this blighting pessimism should be the meaning and purpose of Bochim? Has He not assured us over and over again in His Word, and convinced us by His providential dealings, that the design of sorrow is not to sicken us of life, but to make life a more valuable possession; that disappointment and failure are intended to make life not poorer and meaner, but larger and richer, to deepen and widen the cup of our capacity that it may contain more? It is not meant that we should be idle and passive and helpless under these, but that we should be spurred by their sting to fresh exertion, under the stimulus of which they may pass away. The straits of our being lead to larger horizons, and the dark valleys of our sorrows to greener pastures and stiller waters. We are allured onward and upward by the illusions of our life. The hard, bare, mountain rock is clothed with the softness and beauty of the purple cloud that rests upon it, that our steps may be quickened over the dangerous plain. The mirage gleams for us in far-off sunlight on the barren sand, that going after it we may hasten out of the desert, where it is death to linger. The marsh assumes the appearance of a well of sweet refreshing water that we may not tarry by its side satisfied with what we have done, but pass on to the palm-trees and wells of a nobler Elim. The way to the Christian ideal is through a number of promised lands, each of which in turn proves to be no real promised land at all, until, at last, by these grievous but gracious migrations we reach that happy end of all our hopes and aspirations—the true and final Canaan above—where the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead us to fountains of living

[1] Fénelon.

waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

¶ James Hinton was a man who emphatically dared to look upon the awful face of life, believing that it was the marred and thorn-crowned face of Love; believing that the evil phenomenon is ever to reveal a good reality behind it, which alone has actual existence; that, however black and meaningless it may look, it is the stained glass window seen from without, radiant with martyr and saint and divinest meaning when seen from within.

'I thank God,' he exclaims in his MS. notes, 'there is so much ugliness and evil, so many illusions, because each one of them is the voucher for a beautiful and good reality, as each illusion of the sense in science is evidence and voucher for some true scientific fact. I clasp evil and wrongness to my heart; they are life, they are God's tenderest love. He says to me in them, "Look, my child, and tell me what I am doing; 'tis painful to you at first, but you will love it when you see it." By faith, I see it even now, O my Father! and love it, though unseen, because thou doest it. . . . Blessed love of God! that by the evil of a phenomenon expels the deadly real evil that affects the spirit; loving ministers that come around with sharp swords to slay, not us, but the death that is within us.' [1]

## National Sin and National Decadence.

Judg. ii. 13.—'And they forsook the Lord.'

THE only way in which it is possible to read such a book as the Book of Judges intelligibly is to treat it as an historic document. It gains and loses nothing by the accident of its being included in the Bible. It is simply a record of one stage in the making of a people, and it must be judged as all other similar records are judged. When we approach it in this spirit, we find much in it that is written for our instruction in godliness.

1. Two great lessons lie upon the face of it, the first of which is the constant association in Jewish history of sin with national decadence. Surrounded by heathen peoples, who were given up to uncleanness and idolatry, and whose very worship of Baal and Ashtaroth was associated with every provocation to sensuality, again and again the Israelites were seduced into a partnership with the vices they had been raised up to destroy. The recurring burden of these chapters is that Israel served Baal and Ashtaroth and forgot God. Every time this happened retribution fell upon the people with the sure sequence of a natural law. Sometimes it was some petty Canaanitish prince, sometimes some alliance of many princes, sometimes some military adventurer, who was raised up to be the scourge of Israel. But, however it happened, the stroke always fell, and cut deep and sure. Famine, pestilence, war again and again swept over the land, and left no home without its lamentation for the dead. The moment Israel turned to the true God, sunshine returned to the land; in the hour that God was forgotten, the darkness of national disaster travelled toward them and overwhelmed them. Israel was like some kingdom wrested from the sea, and defended from its hungry encroachments only by the vigilance with which its dykes were manned and guarded; the moment the watch and ward relaxed the billows began to sweep in at the breaches of the wall, and the flood of war and ruin rolled across the land.

And it is so still. The price of national greatness is a perpetual moral vigilance. When the morality of a nation is weakened, when its faith in God is snapped, when the vigour of its virtue declines, the victorious foe is always at the gate. The victor is no better than the vanquished, perhaps; that is not necessary to the retributions that overtake unrighteousness. It is enough that the nation that knows what righteousness is, is not righteous. For such a nation decadence and disaster are an inevitable punishment.

Unless our Souls win back to Thee,
We shall have lost this fight.
Yes, though we win on field and sea,
Though mightier still our might may be,
We still shall lose if we win not Thee.
Help us to climb, as in Thy sight,
The Great High Way of Thy Delight.

[1] *Life and Letters of James Hinton*, 174.

It is the world-old strife again,—
The fight 'twixt good and ill.
Since first the curse broke out in Cain,
Each age has worn the grim red chain,
And ill fought good for sake of gain.
Help us, through all life's conflict still
To battle upwards to Thy Will.

Are we to be like all the rest,
Or climb we loftier height?
Can we our wayward steps arrest?—
All life with nobler life invest?—
And so fulfil our Lord's behest?
Help us, through all the world's dark night,
To struggle upwards to the Light.

If not, we too shall pass, as passed
The older peoples in their time.
God's pact is sure, His word stands fast,—
Those who His sovereignty outcast
Outcast themselves shall be at last.
So,—lest we pass in this our prime,
Lord, set us to the upward climb![1]

2. The second lesson is the ruin that is wrought by daily contact with evil, when evil is regarded with compliance. The first step toward doing wrong is always the dumb and unrebuked permission of wrong. It was so with Lot: he chose to live among the people of the plain for selfish purposes of gain, and he soon became tolerant of the vices which he had not rebuked. It was so with Israel in this, and in many other stages of its history; the people gave their daughters in marriage to the idolaters and the sons found their wives among the heathen, till the demarcations between the worship of God and the worship of Baal got rubbed out, and finally disappeared. The dyer's hand was subdued to what it worked in; the mixture of religious systems soon resolved itself into the universal prevalence of that which was unspeakably the baser and unworthier religion.

[1] John Oxenham.

It is so with us still: not to hate a sin, not to oppose it, is not merely to permit it, but is sooner or later to practise it. Who has not discovered that there is a contagion in sin; that the mind which permits itself an evil book, the eye that does not turn away from a corrupt picture, the ear that is not jealously closed to an iniquitous voice, is soon pacified into tolerance of sin, and from the tolerance of sin passes into welcome of it? Thus the whole life is corrupted, as the fruit is cankered by the one unnoticed spot of rottenness, which slowly spreads till all is poisoned. We simply cannot indulge in friendly partnerships with evil people without in the long run sharing their sins as well as their friendships.

I dreamt, and in my dream I saw
An evil beast with bloody jaw
That with an angel fair to see
Was striving mightily for me.

The angel spread his shining wings;
He shewed me pure and lovely things:
Cool sunlight through the branches green
And running water, clear and clean;

And windy skies with great white clouds,
And buttercups in golden crowds,
And lilacs, rippling in the breeze,
And rosy-blossomed apple-trees.

But when the angel held me high
Still downward would I bend my eye
To where the beast, besmeared with blood,
Lay wallowing in slime and mud.

And when the angel let me fall
Down where the loathly beast did sprawl,
Beneath his heavy paw I lay,
And could not rise and go away.

And crawling there among the slime
I soon forgot the holy time
That I in paradise had passed,
And grew to love the filth at last.[1]

[1] M. Winifred Hughes.

# FORGETTING.

Gen. xl. 23.—'Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.'
Judg. iii. 7.—'And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgat the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves.'
1 Sam. xii. 9.—'And when they forgat the Lord their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.'
Ps. xlv. 10.—'Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.'
Ps. ciii. 2.—'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.'
Matt. xviii. 21, 22.—'Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.'
Phil. iii. 13.—'This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.'
Ja. i. 23, 24.—'For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.'
2 Pet. i. 9.—'But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.'

Forgetting is one of the fine arts of living at our best. It is not that phase of non-remembering where a name or a date or a fact has not strength enough to keep itself from sinking deep into memory's sea of oblivion. Fine forgetting means character asserting itself—not mind losing itself. It is the blue pencil of wisdom—cutting out unnecessary words from the text of our living. It is individual kingship determining what thoughts it will permit to reside in its kingdom. It is the exclusion act of the soul—ejecting the unworthy and the undesirable.

All the virtues, vices, and qualities of mental and moral life may be defined in terms of forgetting or of remembering. Selfishness is forgetting others in over-remembering self. Worry is the inability to forget the troubles that may never happen. Honour is remembered high standards made evident in acts. Anger is the explosion of an overheated memory. Forgiveness is the heart's forgetfulness of an injury. Ingratitude is the heart's forgetfulness of a favour. Habit is the memory of acts making repetition easier. Mercy is the memory of human weakness tempering justice. Envy is forgetting one's own possessions in over-remembering those of others. Influence is the remembered acts of one inspiring the acts of others. Patience is forgetting petty troubles along the way in concentrating thought on the goal. Love is the heart's sweetest memories shrined in another.

It was a wise and comprehensive prayer which the old saint offered when he said, 'Lord, help us to remember what we ought not to forget, and to forget what we ought not to remember.' Our memories are very defective, and very erratic, and very unsanctified. Oliver Wendell Holmes said: 'Memory is a crazy witch; she treasures bits of rags and straw, and throws her jewels out of the window.' And memory remains capricious even when life has entered into the highest relations and has made a faith-covenant with the eternal God. We forget the way the Lord our God has led us. We forget all His benefits. We forget that we were 'cleansed from our sins.' The remembrance of His mercy sometimes goes clean out of our mind. Memory has some very big holes, and some big things drop away into oblivion.

On the other hand memory sometimes hoards the things which she ought to throw away and diligently treasures the things which ought to be forgotten. There are some things for which we need mnemonic aids; there are other things for which we require mnemonic anæsthetics. If at some times our memory needs refreshing, at other times there is dire need of spring cleaning, when her rubbish can be swept away. The full sanctification of memory, while it will vitalize some relationships, will surely destroy the sensitiveness of others.

¶ In these days the art of memorizing has

had great attention, but the art of forgetting has no professed masters or teachers. It is, nevertheless, one of the most important and charming of the arts; the art of arts, indeed. For the skill of the artist is in his ability to forget the non-essentials and to remember the essentials. The faculty of forgetting gives the mind a true perspective, and shows past events in their just proportions and right relations.[1]

¶ There are some things that I must remember, and there are other things I must forget. In other words, I can so train my memory, by choice, by meditation, and by prayer; I can so drive it into the service of my soul; I can give it such a spiritual education, that it will open its hand and cast to the winds of heaven whatever would check me in my struggle heavenwards; but grip like a vice and wave like a banner o'er me whatever will help me to my distant goal.[2]

Let us forget the things that vexed and tried us,
The worrying things that caused our souls to fret;
The hopes that, cherished long, were still denied us
Let us forget.

Whatever things were good and true and gracious,
Whate'er of right has triumphed over wrong,
What love of God or man has rendered precious,
Let us remember long.

I.

## The Things We Ought Not to Forget.

1. Among the things that we ought not to forget we would place first *our debts of gratitude*, and these may be divided into two classes—(1) what we owe to others, and (2) what we owe to God.

(1) *What we owe to others.*—In the life of Joseph we have an instance of a man who forgot his debt of gratitude. It occurs in the story of the chief butler whose dreams Joseph read.

Amongst the chief officers of Pharaoh's court were two—one who ruled the kitchen and controlled the bakers and confectioners, and one who was chief of those that bore the cup, an office of trust such as that which Nehemiah held at the court of Susa. On a certain day both of these fell under the king's displeasure, and, pending a judicial inquiry, were imprisoned in the second division. One night the officers dreamt strange dreams, which they related to Joseph, the ruler of the state prison. Joseph's natural gifts and those which he cultivated—tender sympathy with care and sorrow, power to read character and to divine men's thoughts by the expression on the faces—helped him largely in the interpretation of the dreams of these two men. His question, 'Why look ye so sadly to-day?' made both men unburden their mind, and, as Joseph lived in constant communion with God, he was able to explain to each the meaning of his dream. It is easy to imagine the grateful thanks of the cup-bearer when he received the assurance that he would not be hanged. Joseph cut short his protestation of friendship by reminding him he could be of real help if he liked. 'Think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.' With many promises and fair words the officer passed gaily out of prison on the third day. 'Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.'

The forgetfulness of Pharaoh's butler was deliberate. He partly atoned for it when afterwards he said, '1 do remember my faults this day,' but nevertheless he stands convicted without excuse. He could have thought of it if he had liked without even tying a knot in the corner of his handkerchief. The proverb that creditors have better memories than debtors carries the lesson that anything we want to remember, we can. The sting of the butler's sin was ingratitude. A great service had been done him, but he forgot it. He had made a solemn promise, but had not kept it.

[1] H. W. Mabie, *My Study Fire*, ii. 30.
[2] G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, 181.

¶ In 1814 Napoleon was forced to abdicate; and the sting of the abdication lay in the fact that his generals in that moment turned against him. In Sloane's account of the abdication we read: Since 1809 the European colossus had worn about his neck as a kind of amulet a little bag which was said to contain a deadly poison, one of the salts of prussic acid. During the night, when the terrors of a shaken reason overpowered him, he swallowed the drug. Whether it had lost its efficacy, or whether the agitated victim of melancholy did not take the entire dose, in either case the effects were imperfect. Instead of oblivion came agony, and his valet, rushing to his master's bedside at the sound of a bitter cry, claimed to catch the words: 'Marmont has struck me the final blow! Unhappy man, I loved him! Berthier's desertion has broken my heart! My old friends, my comrades in arms!' Ivan, the Emperor's body physician, was summoned, and administered an antidote; the spasm was allayed, and after a short sleep reason resumed her seat. It is related in the memoirs of Caulaincourt that when the minister was admitted in the early morning, Napoleon's 'wan and sunken eyes seemed struggling to recall the objects round about; a universe of torture was revealed in the vaguely desolate look.' Napoleon is reported as saying: 'God did not will it. I could not die. Why did they not let me die? It is not the loss of the throne that makes existence unendurable; my military career suffices for the glory of a single man. Do you know what is more difficult to bear than the reverses of fortune? It is the baseness, the horrible ingratitude, of men. Before such acts of cowardice, before the shamelessness of their egotism, I have turned away my head in disgust and have come to regard my life with horror . . . Death is rest . . . Rest at last. . . . What I have suffered for twenty days no one can understand.'[1]

¶ Not only are men subject to a forgetfulness of benefits and injuries, they even hate those who have done them a kindness and forget to hate those who have wronged them. Earnestness in repaying a benefit or in avenging a wrong they deem a slavery, which they are reluctant to undergo.[1]

(2) *What we owe to God.*—'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.' To the angels in heaven it must seem incredible that any of His children here below should have forgotten the benefits of God. Yet of forgetting them we all are guilty. Let anyone look back on the past year and he will find that the things which rise up prominently are not the ceaseless mercies God has shown to him, mercies which have come with the regularity and gentleness of the morning light, 'blessings unasked, unsought' that have entered his door; but the disappointments, the sufferings, the injuries, it may be, he has endured. One week's illness is far fresher in our memory than fifty-one weeks of unbroken health. We do not 'write our injuries in the sand, and our kindnesses on the marble'; we write our mercies on the sand, and to-morrow's tide obliterates the record, whilst too often we grave our misfortunes, as with a pen of iron, on the rock.

Why are we so ready to forget the benefits of God? It is because we are so accustomed to them that our hearts are hardened. Someone has said that if all the stars in heaven were to cease shining for a hundred years, and then were suddenly to flash out again, there would not be an eye in all the earth but would be raised heavenward, not a heart in all the world but would break forth in hymns of praise to God. So with God's benefits. Did they come rarely, singly, unexpectedly, how we should prize them. But they have been over us like the heavens, round us like the air, under us like the earth, ever since we were born. And we are so accustomed to them that our hearts are hardened.

Thou that hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more, a grateful heart.
See how thy beggar works on thee
By art.

He makes thy gifts occasion more,
And says, If he in this be crost,
All thou hast given him heretofore
Is lost.

[1] W. M. Sloane, *Napoleon Bonaparte*, iv. 130.

[1] *Maxims of La Rochefoucauld*, xiv.

Wherefore I cry, and cry again;
And in no quiet canst thou be,
Till I a thankful heart obtain
Of thee.

Not thankful, when it pleaseth me:
As if thy blessings had spare days:
But such a heart, whose pulse may be
Thy praise.[1]

2. Next in order among the things we ought not to forget we would place *the good that we hear*. 'For if any one is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing' (Ja. i. 23-25).

The contrast here is between the man who gives a casual glance at the mirror and then hurries on and forgets what he has seen, and the man who gazes earnestly till what he sees is impressed on his mind. St. James uses a parallel, an illustration, which does not strike us as very effective. A man hears the Word of God, goes away and forgets all about it. That is true enough. A man sees his face in a glass, goes away and at once forgets what he looks like. That is not so true. But in St. James's time the simile had much more force than it has now. Mirrors were then made of polished metal, not of glass. They were expensive, they were rare, and very many people seldom, if ever, had a chance of seeing themselves in a mirror and so knowing what they looked like.

(1) The kind of man that St. James has in mind is the man to whom the worship of Sunday is like a passing glance into a mirror—he goes away and forgets.

One man looks in the glass, and sees spots on his countenance, and feels that these ought to be removed; but, turning from the glass, he goes away and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. And they are *not* taken away—not touched, or touched only so as to blacken them the more—touched with the hand which is as vile as the face, not washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. In the clear glass of the gospel, some men in this way have seen themselves sinners a hundred times, and as often have gone away and forgotten. Nothing comes of the seeing; no action is taken.

(2) On the other hand, he who looks into the law of liberty with profit looks that he may do, and does that he may look again with clearer eye. 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.' He looks and sees himself covered, as we all are by nature, with the defilements of sin. He goes to the open fountain, and washes, and is clean. Or he sees God revealed in Christ—Christ as 'God manifest in the flesh,' radiant in His own perfections and yet overflowing with love to us, reconciling the world unto God and not imputing unto men their trespasses. He comes to Christ. He touches Him that he may be healed. He trusts Him that he may be justified. He rests in Him that he may live. And so of everything else a required sacrifice is made, an incumbent duty is done, an opened path in providence is followed. And so strength comes, and purity returns, and the lost image of heaven. He that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.'

¶ A godly minister went to visit a parishioner in a farmhouse a long way, about five miles from church. The farmer was not at home, but he found the goodwife, and began to speak to her. 'I saw you in church on Sabbath, and you seemed very attentive—what do you remember?' 'I cannot tell anything.' 'Surely you remember something; what was the text?' 'Well, I cannot tell.' He said, 'I wonder at you, that you could come so far to church, and go back, and yet get no good.' 'But I did get good, sir.' 'How can that be, when you don't remember a word that was said?' 'Ah! but I came home and burned the bushel.' She had had a false measure.[1]

[1] George Herbert.

[1] John Duncan, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, 441.

3. Another great thing which we ought never to forget is *our cleansing from our old sins*. 'For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins.'

In the New Testament there is a recognized gradation in the importance of duties. Some of the commandments are described as 'least,' and others as 'greatest.' There is a similar gradation recognized in the importance of truths. There are truths which are regarded as primary, radical, fundamental, pre-eminent sources of holy energy, centres from which radiates the driving power of all assured and progressive spiritual life. Predominant among these primary truths are the truths concerning 'the cleansing.' Our fathers used to call them the 'saving truths,' not that any truth is devoid of saving and emancipating power, but that these truths are immediately and superlatively concerned with the deepest and most appalling need in human life.

'First of all,' proclaimed the Apostle Paul, 'Christ died for our sins.' 'First of all,' repeats the Apostle Peter, 'Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' 'First of all,' cries the Apostle John, 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' These are the primary truths concerning the cleansing which formed the staple and the emphasis of Apostolic ministry, and these are the truths which, with glad and passionate eagerness, they published to a sin-bound, sin-saddened and sin-sodden world.

These truths were declared to be force-centres, creative of impulse and motive, with power to change dead, inert, and sluggish lives into passionate activity and enthusiasm. These truths were offered to the world as dynamic cells, forming the battery of a mighty, active creed, which would instil energy into every activity in the entire circuit of the life. Get these truths implanted within you; get them enthroned in the conscience as dominant conceptions; let them be bold and vivid presences in the chamber of your imagery, and a strong, saving, cleansing energy shall pervade your moral and spiritual being like a pure and vitalizing current of healthy blood.

This has been the secret power of the Christian centuries, and its submergence has been the explanation of all moral decline. Exalt the doctrines of grace, and you create the hunger for God. Let the truths of the cleansing be received and vividly retained, and graces will spring in abundance. Let this realization possess the personal consciousness, 'He loved me, and gave himself for me,' and the realization will itself create a moral energy which will exultingly declare, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' But let the great truths be erased or ignored, let the cleansing be forgotten, and forgetfulness will issue in lack of moral enthusiasm, will sink into indifference, into an apathetic contentment with the unclean ways and fashions of the world.

¶ Speaking of the Salvation Army, Dr. Jowett says: What is it that confronts us when we open our eyes? A vast army of men and women distributed all over the world, the majority of whom were in the grip of the vulgarest devils, morally barren and unfruitful, sin-soaked and spirit-bound, but who are now rejoicing in a passionate hunger for holiness and truth. How do you account for it? Here they are, round about us in our land, men and women with an enthusiasm for self-denial which puts the more reputable Church to shame; men and women who were once grovelling in the mire, but who are now fitted to take their place by the sea of glass, among the vast multitude who have 'gotten the victory over the beast.' What is the secret of the great awakening? The remembrance of the great cleansing! All intermediaries, both of ritual and tradition, have been brushed aside, and they have been brought face to face with 'the blood of the cleansing,' with the unspeakable grace and love of the reconciling Lord.

> Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
> In my place condemned He stood,
> Sealed my pardon with His blood.

That is the secret of the Salvation Army, and from that secret proceeds the passionate moral energy which by abundant labours is serving the ends of the world.[1]

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Apostolic Optimism*, 258.

¶ A little boy of seven years repeated to me one day the text, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' Then, after thinking for a little, he said, 'I see how it is; the blood of Jesus Christ is God's indiarubber; when it is rubbed over the page of the book where our sins are written, it takes them all away.'[1]

## II.

## The Things We Ought to Forget.

1. It would be a blessed thing if we could lose the remembrance of our *injuries*. For one thing, the sense of injury is aggravated by remembrance. A spark is fanned into a flame, and 'behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.' And in that fire it is our own furniture that is consumed. Some very precious furnishings of the soul are burned to ruin. Self-reverence and self-control are destroyed. Gentleness and modesty wither away like the undergrowth in a forest fire. Indeed, every power in life is damaged, even conscience herself being seared. But, apart from these moral damages, what an uncomfortable guest this is to entertain in one's remembrance! She keeps us continually ruffled and feverish. She fills the chambers of the soul with heaviness and gloom. She despoils us of the sweet sunshine of grace, and she sours every feast. Why should we keep her? Above all, why should we give her so much attention? For when she absorbs the attention the Lord Himself is eclipsed. If this bitter resentment could just become incarnate, and in visible ugliness could sit with us at our table, we should very speedily order her out of the house. If memory could lose her we should have great gain. If only we could forget her we should more clearly remember the Lord.

'Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?' The question is Peter's and the very question betrays that he does not understand what forgiveness means; for it is not real, if the 'forgiven' sin is stowed away safely in the memory. Most people forgive by tolerating. They say, 'Oh, well, I will forgive, but I cannot forget. I will hold it against you; I will not be able to trust you any more, though I forgive you.' That is the forgiveness of toleration; but that is not the forgiveness that our Lord teaches. It is not the forgiveness that He exercises over us. His is a forgiveness that puts clean out of sight and hides away the thing forgiven.

What is the right attitude? Pardon to the undeserving. God's grace in our hearts pouring itself out again without stint. Love to the uttermost. Charity not to God's poor only, but to the devil's poor. Forgetfulness of grudges; 'let bygones be bygones'; 'let the dead bury their dead.' Why? Because 'to err is human, to forgive divine.' God by His grace comes down to meet us, and we by the exercise of a similar grace go out to meet those about us. This is 'the truce of God' of which the angels sang, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' Christ came to bring peace of a threefold sort: peace with God, peace with ourselves, and peace with our fellowmen. And in this interchange of grace betwixt heaven and earth lies the hope of that ultimate Utopia in which 'Man to man, the whole world o'er, shall brothers be.'

The ruthless hand of savage strife
  Lays waste the fair and smiling bowers;
The ruby flood of streaming blood
  Darkens the earth and chokes the flowers.
But let the fearful day be past—
  The dust forgets the sanguine stain;
The crushed blade rises fresh and fast,
  And leaf and flowers are there again.

The clouds may meet in frowning foam
  And gather in the face of day;
The shadow of the scowling storm
  May overcast the noontide ray;
But soon the south wind breathes serene,
  The bee and bird are on the plain;
The sky forgets the storm hath been,
  And all is joy and light again.[1]

2. It would be well with us if we could forget *the past that hinders*. 'Forgetting the

[1] W. Canton, *Children's Sayings*, 125.

[1] Eliza Cook.

things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal.' When the Apostle says 'Forgetting the things which are behind,' he is thinking of the runner, who has no time to cast his eye over his shoulder to mark the steps already trod. He does not mean that we are so to cultivate obliviousness as to let God's mercies to us 'lie forgotten in unthankfulness, or without praises die.' He does not mean that we are so to forget as not to profit by past experience. But he does mean that we should so forget as, by the oblivion, to strengthen our concentration. It is well for us sometimes to number our days, but only 'that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.' But when we have applied our hearts unto wisdom, when we have learned the lesson of the past, and learned it thoroughly, then we are to rise up and go about Christ's business, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

(1) Some of us are unwisely remembering our *forgiven sins*. There is the sin of a far-off yesterday, of which we have repented, and which we have confessed, and which the Lord has graciously forgiven, and yet we turn to it again and again with heavy and unrelieved heart. We go back and dig it up again when the Lord Himself has buried it, and when over its grave He has planted fair hearts'-ease and lilies of peace. If ever we do return to those fields of defeat we ought to pluck a little hearts'-ease or bring back a lily with us, that we may testify that where sin abounded grace doth 'much more abound.' There ought to be no room in our memories for the heaviness of forgiven sin. 'His banner over us is love,' and that banner waves over the entire realm of our yesterdays if we have sought His pardoning grace.

¶ We have enough things in the present, and there will be enough in the future, to disturb us without running a special train into the great Gone-By to fetch us as special freight things left behind. Some years ago, when there was a great railroad strike, I remember seeing all along the route from Omaha to Chicago and from Chicago to New York hundreds and thousands of freight cars switched on the side tracks, those cars loaded with all kinds of perishable material, decaying and wasting. After the strike was all over, did the railroad company bring all that perished material down to the markets? No, they threw it off where it was destroyed, and loaded up with something else. Let the long train of your thoughts throw off the worse than useless freight of a corrupt and destroyed past, and load up with gratitude and faith and holy determination.[1]

As the dead year is clasped by a dead December,
So let your dead sins with your dead days lie.
A new life is yours, and a new hope. Remember
We build our own ladders to climb to the sky.
Stand out in the sunlight of Promise, forgetting
Whatever the Past held of sorrow or wrong.
We waste half our strength in a useless regretting,
We sit by old tombs in the dark too long.[2]

(2) There is weakness in the memory of a *failure*. To a certain extent the remembrance of failure unnerves one in any new attempt. It is hard for a man to become a champion again after he has lost the belt. If he is always remembering that he failed before, he is very apt to find himself secretly expecting to fail again. The Apostle teaches a new lesson. We must eliminate this weakening factor, by learning to forget. Ebenezer was a field of defeat before it rang with the hymns of victory. And there is no place in our past life where we have been shamefully baffled and beaten, but there we may yet be victorious. Let us never allow the past to limit our hopes of the possibilities, or our confidence in the certainties and victories, of the future. And if ever we are tempted to say to ourselves, 'I have tried it so often, and so often failed, that it is no use trying any more; I am beaten and I throw up the

[1] T. De Witt Talmage.
[2] Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

sponge,' let us remember Paul's wise exhortation, and, 'forgetting the things which are behind, . . . press on toward the goal.'

¶ Some time ago the *Lancet* contained an article under the title of 'The first Lesson of Scientific Education,' which sought to expose the folly of wasting mental tissue and energy in useless regrets. 'The man who hunts yesterday's hare over again, or dwells upon yesterday's letter, or who, by what our neighbours felicitously call *esprit d'escalier,* suffers his thoughts to linger upon the more effective manner in which it might have been possible to terminate last week's interview, is giving his substance in exchange for that which is nought. He is squandering his nerve-cells in a fashion which can yield him no return, and which not only by so much diminishes his power of using them fruitfully in other directions, but also, in all probability, converts some portion of the waste into material of a more or less toxic character. The first lesson of scientific education should be that a man's brain-cells are not only money but capital, and that it is just as possible to dissipate them foolishly as to use them in the work of building up a career.' A pertinent and valuable lesson, indeed, in regard to our religious and moral development! Too many of us are guilty of wasting energy of mind and heart upon mistakes, or supposed mistakes, in the spiritual life, as others waste power in unavailing regrets concerning mental and social indiscretions and infelicities. We suffer our thoughts to linger on the maladroit handling of an affair which, had it been discreetly treated, would have displayed more entirely the Christian spirit, and proved of advantage to all concerned; we reflect upon our inexplicable lack of imagination in failing to grasp the full significance of a gracious situation or occurrence; we deplore the neglect of a propitious moment; we grieve over our lack of recollection, absence of tact, or want of promptitude; we brood over the blunders, sins, and sorrows of past years, all of which might have been averted, and which would not be repeated had we to live life over again; upon a thousand such memories we morbidly muse until little spirit is left in us.

Have you missed in your aim? Well, the mark is still shining.
Did you faint in the race? Well, take breath for the next.
Did the clouds drive you back? But see yonder their lining.
Were you tempted and fell? Let it serve for a text.
As each year hurries by let it join that procession
Of skeleton shapes that march down to the Past,
While you take your place in the line of Progression,
With your eyes on the heavens, your face to the blast.
I tell you the future can hold no terrors
For any sad soul while the stars revolve,
If he will stand firm on the grave of his errors,
And instead of regretting, resolve, resolve.
It is never too late to begin rebuilding,
Though all into ruins your life seems hurled,
For see how the light of the New Year is gilding
The wan, worn face of the bruised old world.[1]

(3) There is danger for many of us in resting upon *past attainments.* It is possible so to hug our past triumphs that we never get beyond them. We may so linger with our success that we become satisfied, and have no aspiration for anything beyond. And thus it is literally true that some men's chains are found in their achievements. They have sat down content with their victories, and life's progressive march has ceased.

Let us remember our achievements for thankfulness, remember them for hope, remember them for counsel and instruction, but forget them when they tend to make us fancy that little more remains to be done; forget them when they tend to make us think that such and such things are our line, and of other virtues and graces and achievements of culture and of character, that these are not our line, and not to be won by us. Nothing short of the full measure of the likeness of Jesus Christ is the measure of our possibilities.

[1] Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

¶ There is a mannerism in Christian life, as there is in everything else, which is to be avoided, if we would grow into perfection. There was a great artist in a past century who never could paint a picture without a brown tree in the foreground. We all have our 'brown trees,' which we think we can do well, and these limit our ambition to secure other gifts which God is ready to bestow upon us.[1]

(4) Some men are always uselessly brooding over the ruins of their *happier days*—the better times when they had a higher position, and easier circumstances, and better chances. Others, again, are guilty of the folly of perpetually repining over the lost strength and brightness of their youth. Yet others waste and weaken their lives in unavailing anguish for their lost beloved. But a happier past adds its sting to a blighted present, even when the loss has been the consequence of our faithfulness, and when we have to say, like the old Pope, 'I have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile.' And when we are tempted to sit down and dream, and mourn for a happier past and wish it back, it is *then* that Paul and all the saints of God cry, Forward! and forget the things that are behind. If happiness has gone, then let it go.' If innocence has fled, so be it. But still there is duty, and that is more than happiness. And still there is character, and that is more than innocence. And the best is still before me in the battle, if only I am true to self and God.

¶ Evil is in that constant looking back with sorrow as if all life were in the past which so often marks the days of darkness. It is not memory of and gratitude for joy and good and love; it is memory of and wild regret for lost joy and lost good and lost love; constant hopeless loitering round the graves of the past, bitter crying for the dead. . . . Cast off regrets; let the dead bury their dead; stand forth free of the past, and girt for action while still in the gloom; look forward, waiting for the dawn, alert and ready. To-morrow the way may open, the call may come, the sunlight break upon your life.[2]

[1] A. Maclaren, *The Wearied Christ*, 166.
[2] S. A. Brooke, *Sunshine and Shadow*, 69.

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea![1]

3. We ought to *forget the lower for the higher,* forget the claims of earth and self for the claims of Christ.

The 45th Psalm is an epithalamium on the marriage of a Jewish king, but it has a deeper and more spiritual meaning. The king sung of in the psalm was a type of Christ. Every true marriage is in the same fashion a type of the union of the soul with Jesus, the Lover of all, the Bridegroom of humanity. So it is not arbitrary spiritualizing, but recognition of the nobleness of the lower love and of its essential similarity with the highest, when the counsel to this bride is regarded as shadowing the duties of the soul wedded to Christ. The language of the tenth verse is the voice of prophecy or inspiration speaking words of fatherly counsel to the princess—'Forget also thine own people and thy father's house.' Historically it points to the foreign birth of the queen, who is called upon to abandon all old ties, and to give herself with wholehearted consecration to her new duties and relations.

In all real wedded life, as those who have tasted it know, there comes, by sweet necessity, the subordination, in the presence of a purer and more absorbing affection, of all lower, however tender, loves that once filled the whole heart. Such surrender is not pain but gladness, inasmuch as the deeper well that has been sunk dries the surface springs, and gathers all their waters into itself. The new treasure that has filled the heart compels, by glad compulsion, the surrender or, at least, the subordination, of all former affections to the constraint of all-mastering love.

The same thing is true in regard to the union of the soul with Christ. The description of the bride's abandonment of former duties and ties may be transferred, without the change

[1] Oliver Wendell Holmes.

of a word, to our relations to Him. If love to Him has really come into our hearts, it will master all our yearnings and tendencies and affections, and we shall feel that we cannot but yield up everything besides, by reason of the sovereign power of this new affection. Christ demands from us for His sake, and for our sakes, the entire surrender of ourselves to Him. And that new affection will deal with the old loves, just as the new buds upon the beech-trees in the spring deal with the old leaves that still hang withered on some of the branches. It will push them from their hold, and they will drop. Christ demands complete surrender, and, if we are Christians, that absolute abandonment will not be a pain or unwelcome. We shall drop the toys of earth as easily and naturally as a child will drop some trinket or plaything when it stretches out its little hand to get a better gift from its loving mother. Love will sweep the heart clean of its antagonists. There is no real union between Jesus Christ and us except in the measure in which we joyfully, 'count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.'

¶ Progress is marked by stations left behind. If we follow Jesus, we go somewhere, which means leaving some place. Journeying with the breast to the East means with the back to the West. The disciples left their boats and nets when they followed Jesus. What has our following cost us? What selfish plans, worldly projects, doubtful amusements, dangerous companionships are behind us for the King's and the kingdom's sake? We sing, 'Jesus I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee,' but another hymn brings the thought to a sharp point, 'Have I left aught for Thee?' [1]

¶ What makes rubbish rubbish? The term is obviously not absolute, but relative. What has made the maple and the laurel look like rubbish to the settler? The parrots and the kangaroos see no change to account for his vandalism. The aboriginals did not find it necessary to hack down trees and fire the undergrowth. Why, then, this fury of axe and torch and gunpowder? It is the conception of an orchard that has done it. A man dreams of apples, and he burns the virgin bush. Then, in his orchard he sees the glint of gold! The soil is auriferous! The fruit-trees become firewood that he may seize the precious metal. Later on, in peril of a watery grave, he flings his very gold into the ocean that he may save his life. Bush, fruit, gold, each in turn becomes rubbish, flung to the slag-heap by the alluring force of a higher attraction. Nor is life itself the last stage. The martyrs cheerfully threw even life away, fascinated by still greater wealth. Had not Paul his rubbish-heap? He counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, for whom he had suffered the loss of all things, and did count them but dung, that he might win Christ. The rubbish-heap can have no grander word written of it than that.[1]

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 25.

## Othniel.

Judg. iii. 9.—'And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.'

No one can read the Book of Judges intelligently and sympathetically without being moved to admiration of the mighty souls that move across its pages. It tells us very briefly, but suggestively and graphically, the story of twelve people who helped to make Israel. Of these the first, and in some respects the best also, is Othniel, the son of Kenaz. Many of these 'saviours' as they are called, were far from being perfect characters. They were rough and often cruel in their methods. There is much in their history that not only shocks our sense of justice but offends our sense of decency. But in Othniel's life, as we have it, there is no hint of anything that offends either the taste or the conscience. His name means God's Lion; and throughout he seems to have been a brave, pure, noble man. The Jews, with whom he is a favourite character, go so far as to apply to him the words, 'Thou art all fair, there is no spot in thee.'

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Luggage of Life*, 150.

How did Othniel become a hero and a saviour of his people? The facts given us are few, while the gaps are many and wide. Still if we bring a little sympathy and imagination to bear upon them, they will bring us face to face with the man himself, and will show us the forces that made him what he became.

1. Caleb said, 'He that smiteth Kiriath-sepher and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz took it.' (Josh. xv. 16). That is the first fact given us about Othniel's life, and that is all that is said about it—Othniel took it, took the stronghold of the mighty sons of Anak, the oracle city of idolatry, before which even Caleb quailed.

(1) Many things go to the making of such a deed as that. Break open this short sentence, and within it you will find some of the main elements that compose a noble character. First, of course, comes courage. It was an undertaking full of desperate difficulties. What Caleb thought of it may be seen on the one hand by the fact that he dared not attempt it himself, and on the other by the prize he offered to the man who would take the city. What was needed was not physical so much as moral courage. There were plenty of men round Caleb endowed with abundance of both strength and daring; what they needed was someone to breathe his own spirit into them—to unite them into a body of which he would be the soul. The courage to follow is common enough; it is the courage to lead that is rare. Othniel had this soul-quality. He led the way and took the city.

¶ Of Captain Andrew Buxton of the Rifle Brigade, who fell in the Great War, his friend Lieutenant Chamberlain wrote: 'Nothing would please me better than to be able to accompany him when he returns, and to carry on as before, for after having served under him in "C" Coy. for nearly eight months I recognize how splendidly he has always commanded, and how prompt and eager was the response made by the men. They seemed ever ready to undertake voluntarily tasks of exceptional difficulty, and their spirit and keen desire to undertake hazardous duties bear admirable testimony to the cleverness of the officer who commanded them. The very fact that one Platoon volunteered "en masse" to take part in a raid on the German trenches—the necessarily rejected "candidates" were only appeased with the greatest difficulty—shows clearly the spirit which animated all ranks in the Company, and the way in which they settled down to their programme of training and subsequently carried out the enterprise successfully, in spite of unforeseen difficulties, proves how keen and proficient they may become.

I shall always retain a vivid mental picture of our advance during the attack on August 18th—the most critical, exciting, and strenuous day of my life. Only by displaying the very highest qualities of leadership—coolness, a knowledge of the exact situation, unswerving tenacity and resolution—did Andrew bring his Company through the attack with small loss, carrying the whole responsibility for success on his own shoulders. When he led the advance, the whole Company responded splendidly to a man'.[1]

(2) Then this deed of Othniel's lays bare to us the central secret of all true power—faith. In the great roll of heroes which we find in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, Othniel is not named; but the true secret of his strength is there—God-reliance and the self-reliance that grows out of it. Judged by our standards, this poor wild son of the desert was grossly ignorant. He did not know much of God, or much about anything; and doubtless there were dark unworthy superstitions mixed with all his beliefs. But he knew the Ten Words—the sublime 'Thou shalts' and the short sharp 'Thou shalt nots' of Sinai. He knew that God was One, that He was holy, that He was everywhere. Such were the beliefs Othniel brought with him from the wilderness—very few, very simple. But he believed them with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength. Not at all as a freebooter or brigand; not mainly for love of Achsah, though that helped; but as a

[1] E. S. Woods, *Andrew R. Buxton*, 216.

servant of the true God he led the assault on Debir, the city of the false gods.

2. Caleb 'gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. And it came to pass, when she came unto him that she moved him to ask of her father a field.' (Josh. xv. 17, 18). This, the second of the three facts of Othniel's history, introduces us to a very different set of circumstances, into a different climate of life in fact. Debir is taken; Caleb has kept his word; the bride is coming to her new home. Cheers and plaudits in plenty attend her as she rides along with her veteran father on one side and her hero husband on the other. Yes, but life is not all cheers. Applause is not much for a young pair to live on; so, amid the excitement and the joy, this fair daughter of the wilderness kept her eyes open and her wits about her. She noted the situation in which her new home lay. It was south land. It had no water, though springs of water were near at hand. She moved her husband to ask for the field that had the springs of water. But Othniel is better at fighting than at asking. He will not, cannot; besides, what does it matter? But it does matter. Water is essential, and now is the time to get it. If Othniel will not, Achsah must. She lighted down from off her ass; she half leaped, half fell, and by her sudden action startled her father. Caleb said, 'What wouldst thou?' Without uttering a word the clever girl-bride had managed to convey the idea that she wanted something, and she said, 'Give me a blessing; for that thou hast set me in the land of the South (that is, dry land), give me also springs of water.' Her words were as witty as they were wise, as bright with gay humour as they were full of sound sense. For by the dry land she meant not the land only but her husband also. He is brave and noble. He loves her for her own sake; but he is poor, and Achsah pleads for a field that by its springs will enrich the dry land of her lot. Her humour, her sense, and her exquisite tact carried all before them. Caleb gave her 'the upper springs and the nether springs.' And so Achsah passes into her new home over the threshold of an important victory, and she has a place given her in the great school of the Bible as one of the teachers appointed by the Holy Ghost to show the world the value of tact and common sense.

¶ Sometimes men of great strength of will and purpose possess also in a high degree the gift of tact; and when this is combined with soundness of judgment it usually leads to a success in life out of all proportion to their purely intellectual qualities. In nearly all administrative posts, in all the many fields of labour where the task of man is to govern, manage, or influence others, to adjust or harmonise antagonisms of race or interests or prejudices, to carry through difficult business without friction and by skilful co-operation, this combination of gifts is supremely valuable. It is much more valuable than brilliancy, eloquence, or originality. I remember the comment of a good judge of men on the administration of a great governor who was pre-eminently remarkable for this combination. 'He always seemed to gain his point, yet he never appeared to be in antagonism with anyone.' The steady pressure of a firm and consistent will was scarcely felt when it was accompanied by the ready recognition of everything that was good in the argument of another, and by a charm of manner and of temper which seldom failed to disarm opposition and win personal affection.[1]

3. And now comes the meaning of that for Othniel and the end of this story. Othniel had to learn the value of tact and resourcefulness, for he was to be called to be the saviour of his people; and he learned it, we may be sure, of Achsah. Then he 'went out to war . . . and his hand pervailed against Cushan-Nishathaim. And the land had rest forty years'. Thus Othniel, even Othniel, became a saviour of his people, and the lion-like man of war, under the influence of God's spirit, was changed into a living prophecy of the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the world. 'And Othniel, the son of Kenaz, died,' having in a rude, hard age, nobly sustained the character of the Happy Warrior

[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *The Map of Life*, 318.

Whom neither shape of danger can dismay,
Nor thought of tender happiness betray;
Who, not content that former worth stand fast,
Looks forward, persevering to the last,
From well to better, daily self-surpast.

The phrase 'Othniel—a saviour' is at once his epitaph and his eulogy.

## A Prophetess.

Judg. iv. 4.—'Deborah, a prophetess.'

The Lord had sold Israel into the hand of Jabin, the king of Canaan. The spirit of patriotism was dead, and there was little to distinguish God's people from the people that surrounded them. They had sunk in the trough of Baal-worship, and as a punishment were the victims of a grinding tyranny. The fear of Sisera and his nine hundred iron chariots shook the hearts that were once proud and free, and his military raids and exactions kept the land in constant terror. But in the hill-country between Ramah and Bethel lived one woman who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and who was incapable of fear. We know nothing of her except that she was a wife, a mother, and a prophetess, this Hebrew Boadicea, as Coleridge has finely called her. But she was no queen, as we use the word; her queenliness lay in her unconquerable soul, the serenity of her faith, the vigour of her patriotism, the clearness and justness of her purposes.

In such an age, when women were the dolls of the harem, and in such a period, when the licentiousness of Canaan had overwhelmed Israel, it could have been only a truly great woman who could thus come to eminence. She judged Israel; and to her, as she sat under the palm-tree between Ramah and Bethel, the cowed and weakened people brought their grievances and made their appeals. We may be sure that in those appeals the name of Sisera was often heard, and the story of his tyrannies was rehearsed with dramatic vividness; and, as she heard, her horizon widened, the fire of patriotism burned more and more vehemently in her heart, the hope of redeeming Israel took clearer and more vigorous shape, till at last it showed itself with the distinctness and consecration of a mission, and the prophetess and judge was transformed into the military leader and the heroine.

¶ We have a similar but more tragic story in the history of Joan of Arc, and one that may help us to understand the character of Deborah. Deborah dwells in the hill-country, in the still regions of solitude and free air, and hears from childhood the voice of the wind among the hills, and its murmur in the palm boughs. Joan of Arc is born on the fringes of the great forest of Domrémy, and in its vast seclusion, as in a great virginal cloister prepared by Nature, she trains her soul in sensitiveness to God. Both are educated by a 'natural meditativeness,' and to each the same thoughts must have come—sorrow for a vanquished race and a beleaguered land, intense passion for God, and equally intense love of country. This peasant maiden of Domrémy heard voices calling her in the deep woods—voices of God that urged her to a great work; and I doubt not that this Hebrew woman, sitting with intent eyes and grieved heart under the palm-tree, heard them too. And to each came the growing sense that she was born to do a great work of national deliverance, and each might have said, as Milton makes the Child-Christ say:

When I was yet a child, no childish play
To me was pleasing; all my mind was set
Serious to learn and know, and thence to do,
What might be public good; myself I thought
Born to that end.[1]

1. Now, what Deborah was under the palm-tree at Mount Ephraim every brave and true-hearted woman is called to be in the service of a cause as holy and interests as precious. We call Deborah a prophetess, and so she was. We regard her as somehow separated by her rare natural endowments and her exceptional inspiration, from the other women of her time, and so she was. But in a very real and

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Comrade-Christ*, 156.

a very living and lofty sense every woman is a prophetess, with a prophet's gifts and a prophet's calling. For what are prophets' gifts but that Divine insight, that swift and heaven-born intuition, which is the rarest gift, the loftiest endowment? It is man's province to reach a consciousness of wrongs to be righted and evils to be remedied by the slower process of reasoning. It is woman's to see those wrongs with the quieter and more penetrating vision of an often unerring insight.

It is only by widening the range of our vision and by coming in contact with sorrows and wants and perplexities other than our own that we can win the right spirit in which to discharge the duties that lie nearest to us. Turn to that Master whose footsteps we are called to follow. Nothing is more profoundly characteristic of Him than the breadth of His sympathies for all, and the special courageousness and explicitness of these in the interests of woman. He emancipates her, in one instance, from legal thraldom, in another from hereditary disabilities, in another from social exile, in another from masculine contempt. His words to one who came to Him merely for the healing of the body, 'Woman, thou art loosed,' are the key to every one of His acts and utterances toward the whole sex. Those acts and utterances are best described by the one word 'liberation,' and freedom—freedom from the servitude of a despised inferiority, and the degrading relation of a chattel or a toy—is the whole spirit of His gospel.

¶ Is not the liberation of woman's power a continuation of the work which Christ began two thousand years ago by the Galilean lake? The student of the Gospels cannot fail to see how often in His dealings with women He was to them the liberator, freeing them from the tyranny of the law, from hereditary disabilities and infirmities. The woman caught in the act of sin He liberates from the tyranny of a law that penalized one-half of the human race alone. The woman leaves His presence, not only free from that tyranny, but with the liberation of a new power from within—the power to sin no more. Another comes to Him bowed down by no infirmity, but by the tradition of centuries 'a Gentile dog,' suffering from hereditary disabilities imposed by the Jews upon those who were not of their race. Bestowing upon her what has hitherto been given to the Jews alone, He liberates her from the chains of tradition, and raises her to a place in the commonwealth of Israel. Mary Magdalene, oppressed with the weight of universal condemnation, is by Him freed from that weight, and with the liberation comes the release of a power to serve. . . .

Christus Consummator lives to-day, and will surely mould this great modern release of woman's power, which many fear, into a spiritual force for the extension of His Kingdom; for was He not Himself the Initiator of this power? Long ago, when woman had not the freedom she has to-day, Josephine Butler wrote: 'I thank God for this wonderful and beautiful solidarity of the women of the world before God. Women are called to be a great power in the future. Many by coming from their homes and fighting for their less fortunate sisters have passed through an education—a noble education. God has prepared in us, the women of the world, a power for all future causes which are great and just.' And Josephine Butler was prophetic. Time would fail to speak of the many needs of the world in these days—needs which women seem qualified to meet, and which, now that artificial barriers are so quickly breaking down, they will be free to meet. There are to-day many wounds and open sores to be healed; peace has come, but nation is sore with nation, class with class. Is not this sad fact a call to all women to consecrate their power to all that will make for a better and happier world; and to begin by seeking to heal the sores and bind up the wounds, and so start anew? [1]

2. There is more to be learned than this. The story of Deborah teaches us that the power of patriotic feeling is often deeper in women than in men, and that the patriotism of a nation is made by the women of a nation. The first shaping force in every life is a woman's, and it is from her lips that the child learns love of country. The man loves the provoca-

[1] E. Picton-Turbervill, *Christ and Woman's Power*, 5, 154f.

tions of adventure, but the woman loves the hearth. The ballads of a country, the fast-fading traditions and customs, the half mythical but deeply stirring memories of its bygone heroisms—how often has it been that in a woman's mind these things have been preserved; and when the child lies on the nurse's lap it is she who makes him an historian, a patriot, a national poet, or a national hero.

We have no means of judging how far Deborah's memory may have been the storehouse of the great traditions of her race, but we have proof enough that her depth of patriotic feeling far exceeded that of those by whom she was surrounded. When she unfolds to Barak her plan of deliverance, he is timid, faltering, doubtful. He does not catch fire readily; she has to fan the spark of patriotism in him. He had probably mixed freely among all sorts of people till he had grown accustomed to the misery of the land; whereas she, in her mountain solitude, had brooded over it till it was an unappeasable fire gnawing at her heart. Barak, soldier and captain of men as he is, can get no further than to say that if she will go with him to the battle, he will go; but if not, he will not go. Perhaps he recognized that the very presence of Deborah in the army would be an inspiration to his soldiers which he himself could not supply, because he did not feel it. At all events, by his very attitude to Deborah we get the measure of her greatness; for it means that of all souls in Israel this woman's was the most dauntless, the most resolved and noble:

> Great in council, and great in war,
> And, as the greatest only are,
> In her simplicity sublime.

We live in riper ages. The mists which enwrapped those patriarchal days have cleared away for us. The new Commandment bids us fulfil a new ideal of religion and of patriotism by love—love in sentiment and deed; love which works not, wishes not, its neighbour ill; love which bears, believes, endures, and hopes; which purges nationalism from greed, wields no curses, sheds no blood, seeks no revenge, even on behalf of God. The Christian cannot utter, dare not approve those wild anathemas or yet wilder blessings of the Queen Bee of Israel; let us look to it that amid our nobler estimate of our brother's claims, our more lenient tolerance of our brother's trespasses, we ourselves fall not below the self-oblivion, fealty, loftiness, devotion to Jehovah's service, which lifted those half-taught heroes and heroines of the olden times to the acceptance and impress of Jehovah's spirit.

## Leadership.

Judg. v. 1, 2.—'Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.'

History, epic, philosophy, dialectic, proverb, essay, lyric, drama—what species of literature is there that is not found, and in its utmost perfection of form, within the Bible? The Bible is not a book; it is a literature. He who has mastered his Bible has achieved a liberal education. Who has not noticed a certain strange suggestiveness of thought which men gain whose minds are in close and vital contact with the Bible? Who has not remarked the obligations which the greatest masters of English prose display to this series of sacred books, which, beyond all others, possess the utmost dignity of thought, the keenest penetration of insight, and the most musical and majestic mastery of phrase? And this literary grandeur of the Bible has no more striking attestation than in the history of Deborah, and the great ode which is associated with her name.

Hundreds of years before Greece and Rome had produced the immortal odes and epics which all European peoples have agreed in calling classics, the art of poetry had reached the noblest pitch of perfection among the Hebrews. In its union of fire, grace, and majesty, its dramatic power and noble temper, its movement and its music, as of 'peals redoubling upon peals, volleys upon volleys, from the saluting clarions of martyrs,' this Song of Deborah stands unmatched in ancient or modern literature. It is one of the great productions of the human mind, and one of the great

possessions of the human race. It serves to remind us how much they lose who are not familiar with the Bible, and to teach us that, quite apart from all considerations of religion, no man who has any care for literature, or any love of poetry, can afford to ignore the Bible. For in simple truth it may be said that a greater than Homer or Æschylus, than Shakespeare or Milton, is here.

One of the oldest of Hebrew poems, one of the most ancient fragments built into the construction of the Bible, the Song of Deborah peals down the ages like a trumpet-blast from the dawn of history. As we read it, even at this late day, its fiery energy, its brave enthusiasm, its exultant patriotism, still throb, and burn, and blaze. For this is living poetry, and poetry that has once lived never dies; its flame never flags, its fire never fails. Its inspiration is the guarantee of its immortality. Prose history may be little better than an anatomical museum of dry bones, or the mere dust swept up from the tomb of a dead past. But the ballads and battle-songs of antiquity are the very life of those far-off times when they sprang into being; they were flung off red-hot, like sparks from the anvil, when mighty deeds were in the making. And here we have one of the most vital and vigorous of these old-world songs. Chanted by camp-fires, recited at public banquets, crooned by mothers to their wondering children, it was preserved in popular memory, or handed down in the faithful tradition of bards as a choice morsel from Israel's heroic age. Fierce, pitiless, relentless, it would be unjust and unhistorical to judge it by the humane standard of Christian ethics. Seen in the atmosphere of its times, it appears as one of the grandest martial odes the world has ever known.

The verses of the text are better given in the Revised Version. The Revised Version does not very often give us felicities; it reminds us too often of what Mr. Spurgeon said of it at the time it appeared—that the translators were very strong in Hebrew and Greek, but very weak in English. But now and then there are flashes of insight, and this is one of the most striking and most brilliant of them all. You will see how little is suggested in the present Version. But listen to the Revised Version: 'For that the leaders took the lead in Israel, for that the people offered themselves willingly, bless ye the Lord.'

Deborah gives two reasons why her enterprise was successful; first, that the leaders took the lead; second, that the mass of the people willingly followed.

1. The first reason of success was that *the leaders took the lead.* They were not engaged elsewhere; they did not linger; they were not too excessively modest. They were in the forefront of the enterprise in resource, and enthusiasm, and execution. And it is a great thing for any cause when that can be said about it. The leaders in those days in Israel were the heads of the tribes. In ancient society there was always an arrangement which provided natural leaders to whom the people could look to give them the lead when any great effort was required; and that still prevails to some extent in modern society. In spite of what some people may say to the contrary, there is still a great deal of loyalty in the people to what might be called their natural leaders, and our aristocracy have immense advantages on their side if only they have the heart to give themselves to public work. Robert Burns, however, speaks of a man who derives his titles of nobility direct from Almighty God, and certainly in modern times we look less to ancestral claims than to personal ability and worth. It is the man with the biggest and clearest and keenest brain that is the leader to-day. The thinker, the orator, the author, the journalist, the inventor, the scientist—these are the men to whom we now look to give the watchword and lead us in public work.

(1) Unfortunately they do not always do it. Very often the best causes have to do without those who should be the leaders. They do not get the people with ten talents, and have to struggle along as best they can with the people who have one talent, and who use it for the glory of God and the good of men. This may be due to the fact that those who should be leaders are occupied with their own affairs, and have no heart for the public interest. Those who have most of this world's

means and influence are often living a life of frivolity and selfishness. Those who are engaged in the struggle of life are often thinking of nothing but enriching themselves. Those who have the finest culture often keep aloof from the profane multitude.

(2) Or the fact that the leaders do not take the lead may be due to timidity and over-caution. Any change that alters the *status quo* must give annoyance and cause loss to those whose interests are vested in things as they are; and these people naturally oppose the change. When once a reform is a matter of history, and is put down in the books of history, all men praise it, but while it is being accomplished few men praise and many oppose.

¶ I remember the public celebration of the jubilee of the abolition of slavery. All classes took part in that celebration. Even princes and dukes perorated on public platforms, and there was hardly a newspaper in the country in which there was not a leader in praise of Wilberforce and the noble men who co-operated with him in that great reform. But in his own day Wilberforce and his co-adjutors were not praised at all. They were even exposed to personal violence. Every evil name was flung at them. They were told they were just the leaders of a handful of fanatics. And how many princes and dukes and able editors at that time praised them? Just about as many as are helping on the Temperance reform at the present time, which has taken the place of that old movement and is supported by the same kind of people. Drunkenness is inflicting on our country evils so vast and potent that any considerable diminution of it, say the reduction of it by half, would be a reform infinitely greater than those reforms by which our statesmen are at present winning their laurels. But if a statesman of the first mark were to take a lead on this subject, he would simply be shrieked at by all who are engaged in that traffic, and by their cousins to the tenth degree of affinity; and nearly all the ablest newspapers in the country would tell him every morning that he was making his own political coffin and the coffin of his party.[1]

[1] J. Stalker.

2. The other reason given by this ancient heroine for her success was that *the people willingly followed.* Leaders cannot win a cause; it is won by the followers. Someone in ancient times said that an army of hinds led by a lion was better than an army of lions led by a hind; but without the weight of an army behind him no leader can win his cause. Now the people sometimes do not follow even when the leaders take the lead. Instead of that, they wish to take the lead themselves. Many a cause has been wrecked by the jealousies and suspicions of men who have thought they were fit for positions greater than those assigned to them, and many a party has come to nothing because of the rivalries of would-be leaders. We often hear of the need of first-class leaders, but what the world needs most is great numbers of men who are willing to take the second place, or the third place, or the fourth place, and to work as heartily there as if they were in the first place.

That requires even more heroism. The man who is in the first place attracts the eyes of all, and may receive his reward in fame, but the man who works well in an obscure place receives only the reward of the cause itself. But is not that the true reward? What are our ambitions and reputations, our disputes of a selfish kind? These last only for an hour; but to have helped the cause of progress forward by one inch, to have made one human being good and happy—that is something which will last for ever.

¶ In his tale of a Field Hospital in the South African War Sir Frederick Treves tells of a private so dreadfully wounded in the jaw that speech was impossible. He was quite conscious, and motioned for paper and pencil. One could hazard a likely guess as to what he wrote. Perhaps it was—my pain is dreadful, give me something to ease it. Perhaps it was—Am I likely to recover? Perhaps it was—Send word of my condition to my friends at home. Any of these would have been quite in place, but what he did write was this—'Did we win?' Poor private, poor pawn in the great game of war, some would reckon him, a mere cog on one of the wheels of the vast and complicated machinery, Britain's honour and

Britain's triumph were so dear to him that in the hour of his anguish and utter need his one desire was to know the issue of the fight.[1]

## A Mother in Israel.

Judg. v. 7.—'A mother in Israel.'

1. In the prose narrative Deborah is described as a prophetess. In the poem which follows she is introduced to us as 'a mother in Israel.' It is the grandest title in all literature ever given to a woman. Motherhood is the glory of woman. The man who does not recognize this in his own mother must be sunk very low in moral density, unless his lot has been most unhappy—the lot of the child of an unworthy mother. Most of us thank God that chief among our blessings has been the blessing of having such mothers as we have known for our own. So Robert Louis Stevenson gave thanks for this gift above all others; and grim Thomas Carlyle melts into the most tender affectionateness when writing to his mother. These feelings were fully shared by the ancient Hebrews. Indeed, they are natural to the race when not spoilt by artificial conventions, and no artificial conventions can utterly eradicate them. Saint Augustine held an abominable doctrine that grossly dishonoured the very notion of motherhood; and yet this very man was compelled, in spite of his theory, to write of his own mother Monica in terms of the tenderest affection and humblest reverence. In this sacred shrine of maternity the fine-spun ideas of the ecclesiastic melt and vanish before that strongest, most vital, most beautiful fact in Nature, a mother's love for her child.

Deborah's first place of honour is that which she shares with thousands of her humble, obscure sisters. She is just 'a mother in Israel'; one of the multitude of mothers in Israel. What could be more simple, more homely, or even more commonplace? And yet we feel that after all this is the most beautiful title that can be given her. Here, then, human nature itself is exalted, in the exaltation of woman regarded in relation to her most natural, normal function. It is so glorious just to be a mother! Thus the highest honour is offered to the greatest number of women. Like fresh air and sunshine, here too we see God's greatest gift given most freely.

¶ Mighty is the force of motherhood! says the great tragic poet to us across the ages, finding, as usual, the simplest words for the sublimest fact. It transforms all things by its vital heat: it turns timidity into fierce courage, and dreadless defiance into tremulous submission; it turns thoughtlessness into foresight, and yet stills all anxiety into calm content; it makes selfishness become self-denial, and gives even to hard vanity the glance of admiring love.[1]

2. But though her prophecy, with all that flows from it, is but second to her crowning honour of motherhood, Deborah has claims to distinction over and above this.

(1) For one thing, she did not permit her absorption in family affairs to exclude the wider circle of the interests that concerned the whole nation. She was not simply the domestic woman. It will be an evil day for the new age, if it ever comes, when woman becomes so absorbed in public affairs that she neglects her own hearth and home. But while, above all, maternal 'charity begins at home,' it must not allow itself to be shut up in the nursery, with no room for expansion abroad. There is a domesticity which is as selfish as it is narrow. Women who leave all the newspaper reading to their husbands, professing indifference to public affairs, and even boasting of their total ignorance concerning them, belittle their own minds, and culpably limit their spheres of influence.

(2) On the other hand, it is not simply in spite of her motherhood, resisting its temptation to total absorption in the domestic circle, and venturing abroad to 'fresh fields and pastures new,' that we see Deborah entering on a great national enterprise. It is really on the ground of her motherhood that she does this. Motherhood develops in woman her greatest gifts and her richest graces. She is most completely a

[1] J. S. Macdonald, *Sermons Preached in Time of War*, 28.

[1] George Eliot, *Janet's Repentance*.

woman when she has become a mother. It is as a mother that she does her best. Even the childless woman is most effective by reason of her latent motherhood. The little girl is seen at her best when she is nursing her doll, unless she is promoted to the honour of tending a younger brother or sister. Now it is a great thing to enlist this instinct of motherhood in the public service. The stupidest mistake any woman can make in this matter is to suppose that she must unsex herself in order to do effective work in the arena of publicity. What we especially want in public work is womanly women, who will raise and soften and humanize the work by the exercise of those very gifts that make the mother the centre of the home.

Deborah as a mother in Israel here acts like the mother of Israel. That is the secret of her mission. She has children herself; and she looks upon other women's children with a mother's eye, feels for them with a mother's heart. It is the mother's heart in her that is wrung with agony at the sight of the misery of the multitude. She would mother them all if she could; she would take them to her bosom and shelter them from the cruel oppression. Thus it is her motherhood that stirs her to action. Her patriotism is an enlargement of an anguished mother's concern for her distressed children.

¶ It is one of the mysteries of history that for uncounted centuries man imagined that he only needed woman in her capacity as a wife and potential mother—that for long ages woman had no place in society except as wife or mother. Why it was so long before the spirit of God moved women to shatter that conception, I do not understand. But with its shattering there appeared for a time a tendency to imagine that men and women are in most things practically the same, and that the difference of sex is a very little thing. Many people seemed inclined to believe that a woman is just the same sort of being as a man, except for one special function—that of motherhood—which can only be exercised occasionally, and need not be exercised at all. That I am sure was a mistake with the possibility of disaster in it. No doubt there are men with many feminine characteristics, and women with many masculine ones. But woman is not only physically different from man. She is different mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. And that is just why we need her so much in all life's departments.

We need woman in politics, for instance, just because she is different from man. If the extension of the franchise to some millions of women had meant merely that the number of people had been increased who would think and vote simply as men had previously thought and voted, it would have been no great event. If women members of Parliament are going to be mere replicas of the old type of M.P., then they might as well save themselves the bondage of Westminster, for their presence there will make no valuable difference. But we do need them in the constituencies and in the House exactly because they bring new and different vital forces to bear on the conduct of affairs. Experience is already teaching us that men and women think more truly together than they do apart. There is something about the sweep and range of man's thought which is peculiarly stimulating to woman's mind, and there are aspects of truth to which men remain blind until women point them out. For this reason very often mixed committees act more wisely than committees of only one sex. I suspect that the same thing holds in relation to art, and even to scientific work. It certainly holds in connection with social work and church work.[1]

3. One thing more. Deborah's public service did not lessen but rather increased her simple faith in the God of her fathers. There is abundant evidence of this all through her glorious song, but the best proof of it is given in the fine description of the sunlike soul at the close. 'So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord. But let them that love him be as the sun when he cometh forth in his might.' Hers was a sunlike soul from the very depths of her being. She could have said what Tennyson said of the sunflower, 'What the sun is to that flower, so is Jesus Christ to my soul.'

There is danger in being greatly gifted. 'Not many wise are called.' Many of our greatly

[1] A. H. Gray, *Men, Women and God*, 18ff.

gifted women in this age have been conspicuous, not for their faith, but for the eclipse of it. It is a sad loss. What the sun is to the sunflower, so is Jesus Christ to a woman's soul. The eclipse of Him is the taking away of all the true brightness and comfort of her soul. There is a sad letter written by Mrs. Carlyle in her dark days. She complains that Carlyle has stolen her faith away, and that now she has nothing left to rest upon.

Never let such a theft be perpetrated by any pseudo-science in your life. No true science to-day has a word to say against the reality of the spiritual life. The best science of our age is reverent in a sense that the science of Huxley and Herbert Spencer never pretended to be. Men now see that there is something more in heaven and earth than was dreamt of by that shallow philosophy. Come, then, to the sunlight of God if you would wish your private life to be restful, and your public life to be beneficent.

¶ According to a fable said to have come from Denmark, a spider once slid down a single filament of web from the lofty rafters of a barn and established himself upon a lower level. There he spread his web, caught flies, grew sleek and prospered. One day, wandering about his premises, he saw the thread that stretched up into the unseen above him. 'What is that for?' he said, and snapped it—and all his web collapsed.

A good deal of man's spiritual history is condensed into that fable. Unless we can keep our modern materialists from breaking our connections with the Unseen above us, some more of man's spiritual history will prove the fable true.[1]

## Reubenites.

Judg. v. 15, 16.—'By the water-courses of Reuben there were great resolves of heart. . . . At the water-courses of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.' (RV).

The Song of Deborah commemorates the battle of Megiddo, in which the army of Jabin, the Canaanitish king, was routed by the Israelites under Deborah and Barak. On account of their unfaithfulness the children of Israel had been 'sold by the Lord' into Jabin's hands, and oppressed by him for twenty years. He had nine hundred chariots of iron and a great general called Sisera, and these he made use of 'mightily' to oppress Israel. The whole country was disorganized with terror; the highways were abandoned, and the people stole from place to place by circuitous mountain paths. In their distress the Israelites cried unto God, and the national spirit was revived through the raising up of Deborah and Barak. Deborah had established a great name for her wisdom in advising men in their difficulties and in settling quarrels. In this way she had come to be intimately acquainted with the misery of the people who were oppressed by Jabin. She determined to try some plan for their deliverance. She was a woman of strong commanding character, and had the faith and courage which made her confident of victory. So in Jehovah's name she summoned the tribes to rally for their freedom.

Being a woman, she could not go to battle herself, and looked round for a leader. She had heard of Barak, who lived far north, almost within sight of Jabin's capital. With shrewd insight she considered he would be likely to know the oppressor so well as to welcome any attempt to throw off his yoke. Him she summoned to her side to lead the army, and when he replied that he would undertake the enterprise only provided she accompanied the army herself, she sent back word at once, with characteristic decision, 'I will surely go.' Thus organized, the insurrection spread from tribe to tribe, and when Barak set out from Mount Tabor to meet Sisera and all his chariots he had ten thousand men at his back. In the battle that followed on the plains of Megiddo, Sisera and his host were completely defeated. They forsook their clumsy chariots and made off on foot; but Barak pursued and smote till there was not a man of them left. Their general himself came to an ignominious end, slain treacherously by a woman, Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, as he lay asleep in her tent, whither he had gone to hide. Deborah's triumph was complete; and to celebrate her great victory she composed and sang this wild ode,

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 63.

in which she tells the whole tale from beginning to end, in language that ranks among the sublimest in Hebrew poetry. She pays a glowing tribute to the patriotism of the tribes who had risen to the occasion and responded with splendid loyalty. Two she singles out for special honour. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field; but Dan, Asher, Gilead, and Reuben had held aloof from the struggle, and on these, from the moral height of victory, Deborah pours her sarcastic reproaches, taunting them with their miserably indifferent and unpatriotic conduct. Reuben, especially, comes under the lash in the words of the text. She pictures the Reubenites by their watercourses greatly agitated and stirred by what was transpiring, roused up to great resolves, and great searchings of heart as to how they were to bear themselves in this national crisis, debating the subject with many words, airing their theories, and the pros and cons of the question, but satisfied with this, and in the long-run doing nothing, preferring to sit and dream among their sheep-folds rather than to take the field with their fellow tribesmen. 'By the watercourses of Reuben there were great resolves,' but they never came to anything! 'At the watercourses of Reuben there were great searchings of heart,' and that was all! It would be a splendid thing to be first in the fight, but on the whole it were better perhaps to abide by the sheep-folds, much pleasanter and easier, and more profitable. It is for this recreant trifling and indifference that the prophetess cries to them with indignant scorn, 'Why satest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the pipings for the flocks?' when thou shouldest have been with thy brethren in the high places of the battlefield, striking a blow for freedom.

1. There are those who have 'great resolves.' 'By the watercourses of Reuben there were great resolves of heart.' That was most praiseworthy. Let us give the Reubenites their due. They were not indifferent to public questions. When they heard of the rallying of the tribes and the united attempt they were to make against the oppressor of their country, their hearts leaped to the nobility and moral grandeur of the project, and inwardly they made 'great resolves.' But they drew the line there: they went no further. They remind one of that son in the parable who, when asked by his father to go work in the vineyard, was quick with his reply, 'I go, sir.' The attractive side of duty fetched him: he was one to whom first thoughts were best; his imagination saw at once the duty done, and the glow of satisfaction with which he would hear his father's praise at the close of the day. Afterwards, when he began to think what lay between the work done in imagination and the actual doing of it, his generous impulse gradually cooled—and it ended in his not going. He would have liked to receive the reward of his father's approval, but he reflected it would take a deal of trouble to win it, and so he stayed at home. He was a Reubenite. They, too, thought favourably at first of the glory they might gain in the battlefield, and of the day when they would come marching home again covered with honour, and their manly bosoms swelled with great resolves as they painted the fair picture in their glowing fancy. But 'they went not.'

¶ It is one thing to resolve: it is another to carry out that resolve. It is a fine thing to see a man sensitive to great impulses towards noble action: it is a better thing to see him acting. It is one thing to see the glory of eternal life: it is another to fight the good fight of faith and so lay hold on it. It is one thing to be fascinated with the beauty of Christ's character: it is another to take up the cross and follow Him. It is one thing to deplore our personal defects, and another bravely to take ourselves to task and struggle into a better life. It is one thing to ponder social evils, to be cognizant of new ideas, to make eloquent speeches on the sufferings of the poor: it is another and a greater to go and work among them. We pray for the heathen, but what are our prayers worth if we decline all actual participation in missionary enterprise? We are alive to the importance of the Sunday School: why do we not offer ourselves willingly as teachers? Let us be done with these

empty, windy resolves, and do some bit of practical work. Let us have done with these castles in the air. The humble-minded man who undertakes to give a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul, to lay the meanest stone in the building of a higher civilization, to teach a few poor children in a mission school, has done far more for the Kingdom of God than he who is filled with great swelling resolves built on no more solid foundation than the baseless fabric of a dream. Browning says:

'Fancy with fact is just one fact the more,'

and that is true; but fancy without fact is just no fact at all. It is well to dream: all great enterprises have been dreams to begin with; but only when the dreamers have been workers, and the labour of their hands and the sweat of their brows have testified to the reality and genuineness of their purpose, have their dreams been fulfilled. By the watercourses of Reuben there were 'great resolves'; but all they came to was just—nothing.[1]

2. There were also among the Reubenites those who had 'great searchings of heart.' This has been interpreted in two senses, both of which may be considered legitimate.

(1) Some think the reference is to great discussions and divisions of opinion: the Reubenites were divided in counsel; they squandered in dissension the time for deeds. They could not make up their minds what course they ought to take. 'Great were the debates' and the criticisms, and the endeavours to find out one another's feeling and purpose. The Reubenites were the critics of their age. They wanted to look at the question from all points of view before they committed themselves to any definite course of action. They had a tribal meeting over the summons of Deborah, and this was a chance for the orators. Some were for one thing, and some for another: they could not see eye to eye. Some, as has been suggested, would deprecate a movement led by a woman; and one can fancy what a time that idea would take to extricate itself from the fertile brain of an orator. Others would question the qualifications of Barak, the proposed leader. Many would argue that it was not the psychological moment, and the speaker with a flavour of military genius or conceit would criticize the plan of campaign, and make valuable suggestions to improve it. In short, 'great were the discussions' that day by the watercourses of Reuben, and by the time they were done they were all at sixes and sevens, and could not decide on a plain course.

The critical tribe is with us still. A host of people are interested in the great struggle of light with darkness, but their interest in the struggle ends with information, discussion, and opinion. Such critics abound outside the Church. They are prepared, at five minutes' notice, to discuss any religious, moral, social, or political question whatever, all the while making no practical effort to grapple with the evils they dissect. Especially do these critics love to scourge the Church. How well they can describe the evil in question! How clearly they can see what ought to be done! How rough they are upon the blunders of philanthropists and evangelists! But all ends there; they spend no time, gold, or blood in any form of practical amelioration; they pipe away in the fields of asphodel close by the silver river of the selfish life. They deride the mistakes of the missionary fainting under tropical suns; they point out the inconsistency of the proceedings of the Charity Organization Society with the principles of political economy; they demonstrate the foolishness and futility of the methods of first one and then another school of earnest, self-sacrificing workers; and having done all this to their complete satisfaction they hasten to see the latest theatrical success or to hear a popular prima donna sing. And we have critics of a similar temper within the Church. They form a standing committee of review, and conclude that most practical schemes are bad and most workers incompetent. These carping talkers bear the least part of the burden and pay the least part of the price.

(2) But this phrase 'searchings of heart' may have a different meaning, one more akin to the 'great resolves' of the Reubenites when the summons came. It went to their hearts, it touched their finer feelings, it made a path-

[1] D. Fairweather.

etic appeal to their emotions, and roused in them qualms of sympathy and pity. It should be remembered that their territory was a long way from the scene of Jabin's worst oppression, and they had not experienced what this meant. They were settled east of the Jordan. Yet, though separated by the river, they felt themselves one with their brethren on the other side; and when the summons came, and they heard of the straits their kinsfolk were in, there were 'great searchings of heart.' They felt in honour bound to go to their help, and the picture of the hapless plight of their friends and all they had to bear from Jabin and his chariots filled them with pity, and even brought the tears to their eyes. But, like their great resolves, their tears came to nothing. They were profoundly touched—but they did nothing. Their sympathy was sentiment, as worthless as their 'great resolves.'

Do not we know this Reubenite, the man, or oftener perhaps the woman, who reads a silly story with streaming eyes, and follows the painful pages with poignant sympathy, and tells her friend afterwards in rapture of that wonderful writer whose book has done her so much good, and that she could not read it without weeping? Aye, but did it send her to real life to test its truth? Did anything practical come of the tears? Did it compel to action and self-sacrifice? If not, it was wasted emotion. It was only a nervestorm, only a little redness of the eyes that might have been spared them. 'Great were the searchings of heart.' But nothing followed. Sentiment! The very word has come to be regarded as expressing something unreal. Sentiment! In spite of its vaunted correctness of feeling, the modern world has sentiment enough—were it only rightly directed—to help the whole crowd of the helpless, to educate the ignorant, and to bring in every outcast from the highways and hedges. There is plenty emotion, could it be harnessed to work. But most of it is wasted, it bears no fruit. It is all swallowed up in the licence of its own sensation, and sought for its own sake. Great, sometimes, one hopes, are the searchings of heart as the worshipper listens to the Word or prays for forgiveness, or gives thanks to God's Holy Name; but greater far in His sight would it be if the fountains of the heart were so effectually broken up that there flowed forth some fertilizing stream to refresh the earth. Our Master wept, but He also bled; and if we are to follow His steps we shall not be content with great resolves, or with great discussions, or with great searchings of the heart, but we shall quietly take up our cross and follow after Him.

He calls us to the cross: not—once to bear
A deadly load,
Raised above nature's height
On some proud moment's might,
With leagues of faces white,
To bless or goad:
It is a hidden cross, for daily wear
Along a common road.[1]

## The Stars and the Right.

Judg. v. 20.—'The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.'

THIS is probably nothing more than poetic imagery! We are not told that the fight at the Kishon was attended by any unusual natural phenomena. It is probably just Deborah's way of saying that God was on Israel's side in the battle, that the whole universe was taking Israel's part.

Now, that is the standing faith of the Old Testament, which no doubt was more easily held in those days, because, if we accept its teaching, we shall recognize that Israel lived under a system in so far supernatural as that moral goodness and material prosperity were a great deal more closely and indissolubly connected than they are to-day. So, many a psalmist and many a prophet break out into apostrophes, warranted by the whole history of Israel, declaring how blessed are the men who, apart from all other defences and sources of prosperity, have God for their help and their hope.

But we are not to dismiss this conviction as belonging only to a system where the supernatural comes in, as it does in the Old Testament history, and as antiquated under a dis-

[1] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 47.

pensation such as that in which we live. For the New Testament is not a whit behind the Old in insisting upon this truth. 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' 'All things are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.' 'Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?' The New Testament is committed to the same conviction as that to which the faith of Old Testament saints clung as the sheet anchor of their lives.

1. Consider, first, the truth of this principle on the broad field of human history and across the great tracts of time. This is the principle —the universe is against wrong and on the side of right. The very constitution of things makes for the overthrow of all oppression and injustice and wickedness. The Bible is never tired of insisting upon a certain sympathy between man and Nature. Nature groans with man on account of his sin—suffers on account of his sin, and is infected by his sin. On the other hand Nature rejoices with man in his righteousness and his desire for holiness; sympathizes with him and helps him in his upward striving; waits with eager desire for the revealing of the sons of God.

Look at the giant wrong of slavery. It was sanctioned by the usage of centuries. It struck its roots deep into the very fabric of Society. When Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton first stood up in the House of Commons to propose the emancipation of the slave, the House laughed at him. The proposal struck them as a jest. But Sir Thomas was no whit dismayed. He knew the giant wrong would have to go. 'The battle is not ours, but God's!' he said, as he faced the laughter. The battle was not ours—there were other forces making for the overthrow of slavery besides the labours of Buxton, and Clarkson, and Wilberforce. Time was against slavery; Nature was against slavery; and, despite all the slaveholders could do, that giant wrong came to an end—the very 'stars in their courses had fought against' them. There is a law, a spirit, in the universe, and that law makes for righteousness and justice. In such a universe wrong lives a precarious life. In the long run it cannot last. Many a gigantic iniquity has come to a full end already. And those that remain among us are under sentence of death.

¶ You have seen, perhaps, this notice on buildings that are doomed to destruction. 'This building is coming down.' Well, I can see that same sentence written across many a vested iniquity that seems unshaken in its strength. I see it written across the face of the drink traffic, 'This thing is coming down'; I see it written across barracks and forts and dreadnoughts, 'These things are coming down'; I see it written across all injustices of our social and business life, 'These things are coming down.' Their doom is sealed, their end is sure: not because I see this and that good man doing his best to overthrow them, but because time, the course of the world, the make-up of this universe is against them—'the stars in their courses' are fighting against Sisera.[1]

2. Consider, next, the working of this principle on the plane of the individual life. If on the big plane of history there is sometimes a little difficulty in tracing out the working of this principle, there is none at all when we contract our vision and confine our study to the individual life. If there is one thing absolutely certain it is this: the universe ranges itself against the wrong-doer. The man who sins finds Nature his enemy. The world is so made that it punishes and penalizes the man who does evil. Let Sisera stand for the wicked and evil man, and it becomes profoundly and eternally true that 'the stars in their courses' fight against Sisera. Emerson insists upon this truth in his great essays on 'Compensation' and 'Spiritual Laws.' 'All things,' he says, 'are arranged for truth and benefit.' The universe is so made that it is helpful to the man who fulfils the law of his own being, and lives purely and soberly and righteously. But let a man violate that law, let him sin against his own health and purity, and at once Nature becomes his enemy and chastiser. 'The stars in their courses' begin to fight against him.

[1] J. D. Jones.

The worst punishment is not that which the law inflicts, but that which outraged Nature inflicts on a man both in body and in soul. And no man escapes that, because the penalty accompanies the sin. You may escape public censure! You may escape even the reproaches of your friends! But escape altogether? Never! The world is so made that it antagonizes wrong. Sin is an offence against the law of the universe. No man can do wrong without making Nature his foe. Let a man do wrong and the whole world seems to be one big eye, staring upon him and accusing him. 'Commit a crime', says Emerson, 'and the earth is made of glass. You cannot recall the spoken word, you cannot wipe out the foot-track and you cannot draw up the ladder, so as to leave no inlet or clue. Some damning circumstance always transpires. The laws and substances of Nature—water, snow, wind, gravitation—become penalties to the thief.' That is poetically spoken, but it is essentially true. Wickedness is not only wicked, it is foolish as well. The man who sins flings himself against the order of the universe. It can have only one issue—defeat, disaster, overthrow, ruin. 'He that falleth on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust.' The world is so made—let every young man and woman lay the truth to heart—as to be against the sinner. 'The stars in their courses fight against Sisera.'

There's not a crime
But takes its proper change out still in crime,
If once rung on the counters of the world:
Let sinners look to it.[1]

## Inaction.

Judg. v. 23.—'Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord.'

God never gave Israel a more glorious deliverance than this from Jabin, king of Hazor. For twenty years he had mightily oppressed them; and even now there seemed small hope of victory. Barak must have felt his weakness as he saw from the slopes of Tabor the great host of Sisera spreading its long lines of chariots over the plain of Megiddo below. What were the ten thousand men at his command against so many? But there were powers that fought from heaven that day. A deluge of rain burst in the face of the enemy, and down flew Barak on them. It was more a slaughter than a battle. The dreaded chariots stuck fast in the mud, their horses plunging vainly to get free. The destruction was complete. Sisera himself escaped eastward to the Jordan valley, to meet his doom in Jael's tent; but his army struggled back through the miry plain into a gulf of destruction at its end. No sword was needed to slay them. The swollen waters of the Kishon swept away the fugitives by thousands as they rushed down through the narrowing hills to the gap of Harosheth, and there, where the swollen river closed the pass, there was an end of the grand army of Jabin, king of Hazor. Scarcely one can have escaped.

It was a national victory, too, not the private triumph of two heroic tribes. North and South had joined to win it, and tribes from Naphtali to distant Benjamin. It was the common triumph of united Israel. Well might Deborah begin her song:

'For that the leaders took the lead in Israel,
For that the people offered themselves willingly,
Bless ye the Lord.'

The Lord Himself had led His people to the battle as He had led their fathers through the wilderness; and the storm that burst on Tabor was no less His doing than the tempest which broke up the granite rocks of Sinai. Then in the midst of this exultant strain Deborah remembers that amid the enthusiasm one city had been cold and selfish, deaf to the voice of duty, careless of Jehovah's call. So straight she turns on the traitor city with the words of burning wrath which have stamped its name with infamy for ever:

'Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord,
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof;
Because they came not to the help of the Lord,
To the help of the Lord against the mighty.'

[1] E. B. Browning.

We know no more than this of Meroz—not even where the city was. It is never mentioned again in Scripture or elsewhere. Its name has perished, its very ruins are unknown: nothing is left of it but this one word of everlasting shame.

Meroz has gone to the doom of such as seek to save their life and thereby lose it. But the feeling that it evoked remains—the feeling of anger and contempt for those who, in the midst of righteous struggles, think only of keeping their own skins unharmed and their own pockets untouched. Meroz stands for the shirker in the Church or in the world. The Meroz disposition is in us when we stand aside in any struggle for righteousness, and mutter in our safe hiding-places, in our comfortable retreats, 'It is no concern of mine.' Meroz stands for the man who wishes to be in when the victory is won, but who will not share the trouble and the agony, the tears and the blood of the battle. It sits on through the critical and dreadful day, thinking only of its own reputation, which might suffer, or of its balance at the bank; but it does nothing—nothing to promote God's government in the world, nothing to defeat the enemies of His people. And it still raises anger and contempt, and a loathing which, though it may not express itself in the poetic frenzy of Deborah, is just as real as that which animated her outburst.

The Meroz disposition in men and in communities is always with us. There is always a struggle going on against wickedness, and against those conditions of life which make wickedness so easy for many around us. There is the same struggle of God's people against oppressions as was waged by Israel against Sisera. That struggle never ceases; it changes its outward form, but its essence remains; it dies out here only to emerge there; it seems to flag, but it never stops; it is the 'warfare in which there is no discharge.' To-day Israel fights on the side of the poor and helpless against the sweating contractor and the grinding landlord in our great cities; to-day Israel fights in the struggle of all that is good against the enemies of God; to-day Israel fights against sin and sorrow, against error, against crime, against want, against starvation; Israel fights—and Meroz stays at home!

What hinders the men of Meroz from coming to the help of the Lord?

1. Perhaps *pure thoughtlessness.*—A man is very busy at his work; he has a worrying business, let us suppose, in the City. 'I just want Sunday,' he says, 'to be a day of rest; and as to praying—well, I am not built that way.' And so, having satisfied himself that he is not built that way, he goes on his way with a light heart, and leaves religion on one side. He is not hostile—he likes his children, if he has any, to go to Sunday School, and thinks it quite right for his wife to go to church; but he leaves his own religion on one side from sheer thoughtlessness.

¶ There has been an outcry from time to time about 'the increase of infidelity,' but the man who carefully answers the question, Is there a God? even by denial is far higher in the scale of rational beings than the man who virtually says, 'I really don't know, and it does not much matter. I'm not going to bother myself to think whether there is or not.'[1]

2. Perhaps *false modesty.*—Probably this was part of the trouble of Meroz. The little village in the hills, poor, insignificant perhaps, lay listening to the gathering of the tribes. She saw the signal fires and heard the summons of the trumpet run through all the land. She knew the summons was for her as well as all the rest. But who was she? What could she do? What strength could she add to the host? What terror could she inspire in the foe? What would Barak care for her support, or Sisera for her hostility? So she lay still and let the battle fight itself through without her. Do you not recognize the picture? Whenever men hide behind their conscious feebleness; whenever, because they can do so little, they content themselves with doing nothing; whenever the one-talented men stand with their napkins in their hands along the roadside of life—there is Meroz over again. You who say that you can do so little for any

[1] *Life and Remains of the Rev. R. H. Quick*, 111.

good cause that there is no use of your doing anything, you can give so little that it is not worth while for you to give anything, your word has so little weight that it need not be spoken for the Lord, consider these things. What do you know about the uses of the Lord, of this great work which the Lord has to do; what do you know of it that gives you the right to say that your power is little? God may have some most critical use to put you to as soon as you declare yourself His servant. Men judge by the size of things; God judges by their fitness.

¶ Two pieces of iron lie together on a shelf. One is a great clumsy ploughshare; the other is a delicate screw that is made to hold the finest joint of some subtle machinery in place. An ignorant boor comes up and takes the great piece and treasures it. The little piece he sees is little, and he throws it away. Fitness is more than size. You can see something of your size; but you can see almost nothing of your fitness until you understand all the wonderful manifold work that God has to do. It is a most wanton presumption and pride for any man to dare to be sure that there is not some very important and critical place which just he and no one else is made to fill. It is almost as presumptuous to think you can do nothing as to think you can do anything. The latter folly supposes that God exhausted Himself when He made you; but the former supposes that God made a hopeless blunder when He made you, which it is quite as impious for you to think.[1]

3. Perhaps *sheer selfishness.*—Meroz was a city of Israel, and might have fought for Israel in the hour of Israel's danger; but the men of Meroz liked better to play a selfish game of their own. They could not believe that God's enemy must perish, even though it were the mighty Jabin. Had he not nine hundred chariots of iron? So it was not prudent to help the band which fought the battle of the Lord of Hosts. If Barak prevailed, they would share the victory they had not helped to win; if Sisera prevailed, they could make a merit of having had nothing to do with the revolt. Either way, they would be gainers. So they played their selfish game, and this is their reward. And like theirs shall be the reward of every man who makes his life a selfish game. Be his talents what they may, his sin shall find him out.

¶ High over the cliffs of the Northumberland coast rise the stately ruins of Dunstanburgh Castle, the work of the great Earl Thomas of Lancaster; and in more ways than one methinks they speak of him. Earl Thomas was a mighty man indeed, with four great earldoms in his hand, the people devoted to him, the king helpless to resist him. No man ever held a more commanding place in England, or a greater power for good. Earl Thomas threw it all away. He played a base and selfish game of his own, and came to a shameful end. So it was but fitting that his lofty castle should be given to the owls and the bats. Its majestic ruins do but witness of its builder's infamy. Earl Thomas is forgotten; and they that remember him remember him for shame.[1]

[1] Phillips Brooks, *The Candle of the Lord*, 297.

## The Blessing of Jael.

Judg. v. 24.—'Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be.'

It is in the song of Deborah, rather than in the prose narrative which precedes it, that we best understand the exigency of the time, and the spirit of the leaders of the theocracy. The theocracy was for the moment almost impersonated in Deborah. And Deborah lives in her song; in all the power of her prophetic utterance, in all the penetrating intensity of her womanly feeling. In her prelude she glances at the great days of Israel, when God was felt to be among His people marching from Sinai; she mourns the period of weakness and degradation that had followed; she does not shrink, through any false modesty, from marking her own arising as the epoch of her country's resurrection. She proclaims her sympathy with the national leaders and with the volunteers from among the people. Nobles and people are to reflect on the mighty

[1] H. M. Gwatkin, *The Sacrifice of Thankfulness*, 158.

acts of the Lord—for such indeed they were—as the returning warriors related them among the women watering their flocks. Then, while Barak is leading the captives in procession before her, she repeats the story of the victory: the streaming of the heroes of Israel down the heights to fight the enemy in the plain of Jezreel; the terrific, never-to-be-forgotten shock of battle at Taanach; the fighting of the very stars in their courses against Sisera, through some storm or other natural phenomenon which increased his difficulties or hastened his discomfiture; the swollen waters of the Kishon, laden with the bodies of the dying and the dead; the wild confused flight of the dreaded chariots of iron before the men of Israel. She ends with the tragic death of the general himself in the tent of Jael, and with the picture suggested by her own woman's heart—the picture of Sisera's mother expecting her son's return, explaining to herself the delay, for which there was, she already instinctively feels, all too surely another explanation. And then the song ends suddenly with a burst of prayer, that all the enemies of the Lord might perish as did Sisera.

In the narrative of Sisera's murder (Judg. iv. 18-22), we see the difference between Hebrew prose and Hebrew poetry. 'And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in unto me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink and covered him. . . . Then Jael . . . took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it unto the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.' Almost with pathos and tenderness, you notice, does the historian tell his tale of treachery and guilt: there is none of the gloating which marks the passionate exclamations of the martial and victorious prophetess. 'Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.'

What are we to say of this blessing of Jael?

Taking the story as it stands, we must attribute her action either to an intense feeling of patriotism, if she looked upon herself as belonging to the people of Israel, or to a strong sympathy with the sufferings of Israel and belief in the God of Israel, and consequent indignation against one who had dared to oppress the chosen nation. If it was the fierceness of patriotism, we may find a parallel in the woman who threw down a piece of a millstone on the head of Abimelech; or in Judith, who cut off the head of Holofernes. If it was the sympathy of one of alien race who had come to believe in the God of Israel, we may compare her case with that of Rahab, who sheltered the spies, and became renowned as a pattern of faith among the Jews of a later age. However we explain it, the action is not one which we, as Christians, can approve. If it had been committed in the present day, we could characterize it only as a cruel and treacherous slaughter; though no doubt we can imagine circumstances which would, to a certain extent, mitigate our abhorrence. Suppose, for instance, that one who had been guilty of such crimes as were laid to the charge of Nana Sahib in the Indian Mutiny had fallen into the hands of a faithful native follower of the English, who had been bred up in the belief that vengeance was a sacred duty; if such an one had taken the same vengeance as Jael did, even in our day many Englishmen would have been found to echo the words of Deborah, 'Blessed above women shall she be.' Still, if we look calmly at the action in itself, and compare it with the words of our Lord, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you'; if we remember the words, 'Ven-

geance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord: therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink,' we cannot but feel that Jael's action is entirely opposed to the spirit of Christ.

But, if this is so, how are we to understand the language of the prophetess, pronouncing Jael blessed among women? The whole tone of Deborah's song is one of exultation. She dwells with delight on every detail of the action. There is not the slightest hint that she sees anything wrong in it. How, then, are we to explain the discrepancy between our sense of right and the words of Deborah? The answer is simple. To us Jael's deed may seem nothing less than treacherous murder, but judged by the standards of the time it was a glorious and praiseworthy action. It is by the standards of Deborah's day that we must judge the morality of the deed.

In dealing with such Old Testament stories we must bear in mind that the Bible is the record of God's gradual education of mankind. Each generation received the teaching for which it was fitted. It was only in the fullness of time that the final revelation was possible. Had the doctrine of non-retaliation been promulgated in the days of the Judges, it is impossible, humanly speaking, that Israel should ever have established itself in Canaan, or ever have learnt the stringency of duty, and the hatefulness of sin. The first simple lesson is 'Hate sin, love righteousness,' and in the early stages, whether of a nation or of an individual, this naturally clothes itself in a personal form, 'Hate the sinner, the false, the impure, the cowardly, the oppressive; love the righteous, the true, the pure, the honest, the brave, the patriotic.' It is only when this lesson has been well learnt, has become ingrained in the mind and character, that either nation or individual is capable of advancing to the further lesson, 'Hate the sin, but love the sinner. Learn to see in the sinner something more than sin personified. See in him a creature made in the image of God; fallen, it may be, very far from the Divine ideal, but still capable of being renewed in the likeness of Christ; one of those for whom Christ died; one in whose heart the Holy Spirit may at this moment be striving, one who may yet become, like the persecutor Saul, a chosen vessel, fit for the Master's use.'

¶ By loving our enemy we shall learn to know him better; knowing him better our love for him will increase. We love well only that which we are thoroughly acquainted with; love renders its object lucid. If we love our enemy his soul will become more clearly revealed to us, and the deeper our understanding of him becomes the more clearly shall we perceive that he has a right to our compassion, a right to our love. For every enemy is an unrecognized brother. We often hate those who most closely resemble us. Something of ourselves, of which we are perhaps unconscious, is in our enemy also, and may well be the cause of our dislike of him. By loving our enemy we purify our own spirit and exalt his. A light that liberates may be born of a hatred that separates. The greatest of blessings may be the outcome of the worst of evils.

It is for this reason that Jesus commands us to invert the relations that now prevail amongst men. When man shall love what he hates to-day and hate what to-day he loves, he will be a different being and life will become the opposite to what it now is. And as life to-day is made up of evil and despair, the new life, being its opposite in all things, will be goodness and happiness. For the first time bliss will be ours; the Kingdom of Heaven will begin on earth. We shall find Eden once more, and for all eternity; that Eden which was lost because the first human beings sought the difference between good and evil. But with the absolute love, that is equal to that of the Father, good and evil will no longer exist. Evil is overcome, destroyed by good. Eden was love—love between God and man; between man and woman. The love of every man for all men will be the new earthly Paradise, the Paradise regained. In this sense Christ leads Adam back to the gates of Eden and teaches him how to re-enter the garden and dwell therein for ever.[1]

[1] Giovanni Papini, *The Story of Christ*, 122.

## The Old Testament.

Judg. v. 24.—'Blessed above all women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be.'

How are we to regard the Old Testament? Broadly speaking, there are three conceivable views that may be taken of it. It may be regarded (1) as contrary to the New; (2) as on a level with it; or (3) as preparatory, while yet inferior, to it.

1. In the earliest days of the Church the first of these three positions was tolerably widely held. Many among the so-called Gnostic heretics took up a position of more or less decided hostility to the Old Testament. Some among them regarded the Creator of the world, the God of the Jews revealed in the Old Testament, as a subordinate being, from the defects of whose work Christ was sent by the supreme God to redeem mankind. Others went further, and not only maintained that Creation was the work of a being hostile to the true God, but actually glorified Cain, Esau, Korah, and others who are described in the Old Testament as disobedient to God. These men they regarded as their saints and heroes; and naturally they rejected the teaching of the Old Testament altogether, and asserted that it was directly contrary to the New. For a Christian who accepts the New Testament such a position is wholly impossible. Our Lord's utterances with regard to the Old Testament show very plainly that He, at least, regarded it as a Divine book. To it He constantly makes His appeal. He came 'not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil' them. 'The scriptures' of the Old Testament, He tells us, 'cannot be broken.' Moses and the prophets are His standard authorities, which testify of Him, whose Scriptures must be fulfilled. So, in the Acts of the Apostles, those who search the Scriptures are commended. And Paul, writing before ever there was a collection of books of the New Testament, and so referring only to the Old, says directly that 'all scripture,' God-inspired as it is, 'is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness'; and thus no one who admits the authority of our Lord and His Apostles, or accepts the New Testament as a whole, can possibly feel any hesitation in regarding the Old Testament as an integral part of God's revelation of Himself to man.

2. So much for the first position: the Old Testament is not contrary to the New. That it is on a level with it has been the opinion maintained by many from the days of the Puritans of the sixteenth century onwards. So far were the Puritans from regarding it as in any way inferior to the New that they were ever regulating their conduct by it. The actions of those who lived in the dim twilight of a preparatory dispensation were taken by them as models for those who enjoyed the light of the Gospel, and deeds such as those of Ehud and Jael were held to warrant the commission of similar deeds on the part of Christians. John Balfour of Burley could justify the assassination of Archbishop Sharp in cold blood by his appeals to the Book of Judges, and by the action of Samuel in hewing Agag in pieces. He and others like him regarded themselves as God's chosen people. Branding all who did not see eye to eye with them in religious matters as idolaters who would bow down to the golden calf at Bethel, they imagined that they themselves had received a Divine commission to extirpate such heathen, like the Jews of old, and that they were under a similar charge to show no quarter.

This view, however, equally with the former one, is opposed to the plain teaching of our Lord in the Gospel. There He distinctly draws a contrast between what was permitted or even enjoined under the old dispensation and what is allowable now. He extends, or modifies, or repeals provisions of the law: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' And when the Pharisees bring before Him the question of divorce, and remind Him that the law of Moses permitted a man to put away his wife, back comes

the answer at once; 'For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of the Creation, male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' And when the sons of thunder appealed to the example of Elijah, and asked to be allowed to call down fire upon the inhospitable Samaritans, as also Elijah did, He turned at once and rebuked them: 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.'

3. Thus both these views—(1) that the Old Testament is contrary to the New, and (2) that it is to be placed on a level with it as in all points a guide for Christian conduct, are condemned by our Lord. If either of them be adopted we are landed in grave moral difficulties. Plainly, the truth lies somewhere between them; and if only men would learn to regard the Old Testament as our Lord Himself regarded it—viz., as preparatory, while inferior, to the New—they would soon find that their difficulties in connection with it would diminish, if not altogether disappear. The two classes of passages already quoted show distinctly that, while our Lord regarded it as Divine, and as preparatory to His mission and work, He yet held that the spirit for Christian men is not that of the Old Covenant. A higher revelation has taught us that things cannot now be defended which once, 'for the hardness of men's hearts,' were permitted. We can surely understand how under a preparatory dispensation perfection could not be attained, and how much that we now see to have been culpable and faulty could be tolerated for the time if only there was a forward movement going on, and men were gradually rising to a higher level.

And it is just this forward movement which we can discern so clearly all through the Old Testament, and which justifies its claim to be regarded as an integral part of Holy Scripture. And the interest of the Book of Judges is that, in belonging as it does to a very early period, it takes us back to the beginning of the nation's life, so that by its help we can trace its development from its earliest and rudest stages. Remembering this, we can understand both Jael's act and Deborah's praise of it. We are not called upon to justify either. But when we take into account the circumstances of the age, and the very imperfect light granted to that generation, we can understand both. Judged by the standard of the gospel they cannot but be condemned. But to apply to them this standard is to forget altogether the preparatory and disciplinary character of God's dealing with His people, and to ignore the teaching of our Lord with regard to the Old Testament. There was an element of goodness in Jael's act. Her motive was good, though our trained moral sense revolts against the method she adopted for ridding Israel of its most formidable foe. But if there was this element of goodness in it, why should we feel surprise if a prophetess—an inspired prophetess, if you will—in that wild age, with its crude notions of right and wrong, should seize upon it, and utter her benediction over the doer of the deed? It is a benediction which could have been uttered only in such an age; but just where it stands in the Bible it is perfectly natural. After all, say what you will about this and some other passages in the Book, we may well thank God that they find a place within the canon of Holy Scripture, for we can find in them even now a stimulus for virtue. We may well be inspired and stimulated by the devotion of these heroes and heroines of Israel. We need not copy their barbarities. Jesus Christ has taught us to discriminate between the good and the evil in their conduct, but we can never read this record without having our courage strengthened and our patriotism quickened. Gideon's dauntless deeds, Deborah's flaming speech, Samson's sublime self-sacrifice, the unhesitating self-abnegation of the daughter of Jephthah—all kindle in our hearts the fire of noble endeavour.

When in the midst of this embattled field
Compassed with terrors and the angry foe
For very stress I may no farther go
But only stand and hold my battered shield,

And when, alas, in this weak state revealed
My recreant powers in craven sort do show,
Refusing that right aid to me they owe,
And sick at heart I am on point to yield:

Oh, then if I but think on deeds long past
Of Saints and Heroes who achieved and bore,
Who on the perilous edge of fate stood fast
Nor blenched nor quailed the sternest doom before,
Then stirs my heart as with a trumpet-blast:
Once more unto the breach, my Soul, once more! [1]

## A Man of Valour.

Judg. vi. 12.—'The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.'

Gideon is a man somewhat overlooked, but worthy to be set alongside the foremost heroes of the Bible. Many a smaller man has had more honour than this hero, at once gentle and strong, cautious and brave, deeply troubled by the evil of the times, and yet not without a great laugh in his heart and a ready humour.

It was a period in which hope had died out of God's people. They had been overrun by one of those tribes that God had bred in the deserts, for no other purpose, it would appear, than the scourging of delinquent civilizations. There have been barbarians from whom it was good for a land to suffer invasion; they have proved more profitable nurses of its powers than the civilized people whom they dispossessed. But such has not been the case with most of the loose hordes that Arabia has disgorged on the fertile lands to the west and north of her, and who have been without the instincts to settle and cultivate. Such Ishmaelites have not brought anything but ruin. They have spoiled the fields, stripped the woods, and by their recurring raids rendered civic life an impossibility.

For seven successive years Israel had suffered from such an invasion. It had crossed the Jordan, flowed up Esdraelon, and each year had risen higher up on the hill-country to the south. In the interior of Manasseh and Ephraim the peasants were finding it ever more difficult to secure their harvests. The villages were being abandoned, and the population were betaking themselves to caves and dens, where their families and their grain might be hidden from the raiding parties of Arabs. This would have been a blow to any community; it was a terrible shock for Israel. They knew that they had been brought to the land by the hand of God Himself, revealed in many wonderful deeds on earth and sea. For a number of years they had been settled on the land, and had felt instincts of a progressive civilization. The Israelites had risen above the tribes by which they were surrounded; and they knew their distinction. They, too, like their neighbours, had been only a loose confederacy of small clans. But faith in the same God had bound those clans together, and had given them the consciousness of a nation. Their religion, especially under the leadership of Deborah, had brought forth patriotism, and the duties of discipline and self-sacrifice. By the character of their God righteousness was enforced, grace and patience were exemplified, and it would even appear that, however dimly (for centuries were needed to bring them to face it), some instinct of a service beyond themselves already stirred within them. But now from such a position they were cast down by the stupidest and unthriftiest of peoples, who could not teach them anything, or train them to any discipline, but were fit only to beat them back into the condition of cave-dwellers, hunted and craven, incapable of act, thought, or hope. A nation driven to earth, men reduced to reptiles—can we conceive of a more desperate state of affairs?

Yet God had His servant in preparation, who was to work the deliverance.

1. We find the man at Ophrah, west of the Jordan, an insignificant little place—not a spot where it would be imagined a judge or a general would be found; but 'the streams that turn the mill-wheels of the world often rise in solitary places'. Gideon was threshing wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. The corn in the East was usually

[1] J. Bunker, *Shining Fields and Dark Towers*, 131.

threshed near the field where it grew, on an open area prepared and levelled for the purpose. The winepress would necessarily be some distance away among the vineyards, and would be on many accounts the least likely place in which anyone would suspect the threshing of corn to be carried on. The Angel of the Lord came upon Gideon at his work, and the sudden appearance of a stranger in such circumstances must in the first instance have given him much alarm. An unexpected witness of what one wishes to conceal is always startling. The first words of the stranger, however, would reassure him: 'The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.' That was an ancient mode of salutation. Boaz, when he went among the reapers, said, 'The Lord be with you!' and they straightened their backs, and looked into his honest face and said, 'The Lord bless thee!'

2. It is remarkable that God chose a man who not only had felt the strain of these terrible times, but whom the strain had wearied and torn with many doubts. For the very highest work God often chooses men who have doubted. Very few are the great souls who, like Isaiah or Paul, are ready to answer God's call upon the first answer to their doubts. Many of them, it is true, have been doubters only about themselves. Moses and Jeremiah held back from a sense of personal unfitness: 'Thy servant is no speaker; I am a child.' Gideon, too, had a feeling of his unworthiness: 'Oh Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.' That, however, was only his second doubt: there was a previous and a darker temper of mind. Gideon was uncertain, not of himself only, but of his people, and of the whole purpose of God that had been declared to them. 'Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us, and where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath cast us off, and delivered us into the hand of Midian.' This is a very troubled spirit. We feel something here which cuts all the sinews of hope.

But the strong lesson which shines so clearly from the story is that there is no doubt too dark to be hopeless; none too deep for God to lift a man out of and make him a man of faith and energy. We need that lesson—we of to-day. The kind of doubt that is meeting many of our best young men upon their entry into manhood is of this nature. Gideon's words have a strong modern ring about them. It is just this cry, that the age of miracles is over; this despair, that we cannot continue to work with the brave beliefs and hopes of our fathers; this failure of faith in the presence and the leading of God Himself, that beset us.

3. Gideon was found in the way of duty. Whilst he works on his improvised threshing-floor patriotic thoughts fill his mind, and his breast heaves as he thinks of his degenerate countrymen, and of his fatherland overrun by strangers. Sheaf after sheaf is disposed of mechanically, for in the secrecy and silence of his spirit he is pleading with the God of Israel to send a Deliverer. And as he prays the answer comes. The Angel of Jehovah is looking on, and Gideon himself is chosen. Precisely the same thing has happened times without number in the history of the Church.

Many of the world's most earnest workers have had to remain at the commonest and homeliest duties a long time before the Divine call has come. Moses must stay in the desert tending the flock for forty years; even Jesus must toil at Nazareth until almost within sight of Calvary. But God's time is never a moment too late. The main thing is to be, like Gideon, in the right attitude, and in a condition of mind that presents no barrier to stepping from one duty to a higher and nobler one. There is no need to fret and chafe. God knows where we are and will send a messenger at the appointed time. It matters little to Him whether, like Gideon, we are threshing wheat, or, like Elisha, holding the plough, or, like David, keeping the flock. If He wills to call us to rulership and a kingdom all local relationships and ties shall be only stepping-stones thereto.

We must take what we have, work from

where we find ourselves, do the duty that lies before us, if we would gain the light. Cynicism, wounded pride, peevishness are not the tempers God comes to meet and to lift. The men He promotes are those who do their duty doggedly in such space and with such light as they have. He meets us, not on some wide ground of our own fancy, but where He has placed us, in the dust and din of our common life. This is the way His heroes are made. When you are apt to complain—as who is not sometimes?—that you have no opportunity for the hopes with which your heart is bursting; that your Lord is an austere man; that the facts of life frustrate faith; that the amount of mystery He leaves to us renders confident action and long hope impossible; remember to make the most of what you have, and to do the work that lies to your hand. Remember David Livingstone, who learned in the noise of a spinning factory the rudiments of what gave him a University education and launched him on his great career. Remember Gideon, whom God met, and called a hero because, while suffering from both doubt and adversity, he still did what he could do with a brave and dogged heart.

Methought that in a solemn church I stood.
Its marble acres, worn with knees and feet,
Lay spread from door to door, from street to street.
Midway the form hung high upon the rood
Of him who gave his life to be our good;
Beyond, priests flitted, bowed, and murmured meet,
Among the candles shining still and sweet.
Men came and went, and worshipped as they could—
And still their dust a woman with her broom,
Bowed to her work, kept sweeping to the door.
Then saw I, slow through all the pillared gloom,
Across the church a silent figure come:
'Daughter,' it said, 'thou sweepest well my floor!'
It is the Lord! I cried, and saw no more.[1]

[1] George Macdonald.

## Jehovah-Shalom.

Judges vi. 24.—'Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom.'

AWAY on the west side of the Jordan, in Ophrah of Manasseh, a farmer's son was one day engaged in threshing wheat beside a lonely winepress. It was a common but a needful occupation. And the farmer's son was carrying it through with a sore heart, thinking of all the calamities that had fallen on the land and wondering whether God had forsaken his people—as Cromwell in England and Wallace in Scotland afterwards wondered in the evil days that came on their countries. Lifting up his eyes, perhaps to stretch himself at midday, he saw a stranger quietly seated beneath an oak tree near by. To his amazement, the stranger addressed him as a 'mighty man of valour,' assured him that Jehovah was with him, and directed him to go in Jehovah's might against Midian, in which case he would save Israel. It was a clear call to undertake the deliverance of Israel, like that which came to Cincinnatus, to Wallace, to Cromwell, to Washington. Like Moses, he deprecated his fitness to undertake such a mission, but was again assured that God would be with him and lead him to victory. Before finally assenting, he asked a sign that the person who talked with him was Jehovah. Having obtained this, he built an altar in commemoration of the interview and called it 'Jehovah-shalom,—Jehovah is peace.'

1. The first thing that the name of the altar seems to suggest is the great discovery which this man had made, and in the rapture of which he named his altar—that the sight of God is not death, but life and peace. Gideon was a plain, rude man, with no very deep religious experience. Jehovah was a name, a tradition which his fathers had told him. That was all that he knew of the God of Israel. Into this hearsay religion, as in a flash, there comes all at once this crushing conviction—the hearsay God is beside you, speaking to you! You have personal relations to Him, He is nearer you than is any human being, He is no mere

Name; here He stands! Whenever the lightning edge of a conviction like that cuts its way through the formalisms and traditionalisms and hearsay repetitions of conventional religion, there comes what came to Gideon, the swift thought, 'And if this be true, if I really do touch, and am touched by, that living Person whose name is Jehovah, what is to become of me? Shall I not shrivel up when His fiery finger is laid upon me? I have seen Him face to face, and I must die.'

Gideon's terror opened the way for the gracious proclamation—which would have been needless but for it—'Peace be unto thee; fear not, thou shalt not die.' The sight of God changes from a fear to a joy, from a fountain of death to a spring of life. Terror is turned to tranquil trust. The narrow and rough path of conscious unworthiness leads to the large place of happy peace. The Divine word fits Gideon's condition, and corresponds to what was then his deepest necessity; and so he drinks it in as the thirsty ground drinks in the water. And in the rapture of the discovery that the Name that had come down from his fathers to him was the Name of a real Person, with whom he stood in real relationships, and those of simple friendship and pure amity, he piles up the rough stones of the place, and makes the name of his altar the echo of the Divine voice. It is as if he had said with rapture of surprise, 'Then Jehovah is peace; which I never dreamed of before.'

2. But the name of the altar suggests also that God's peace is the best preparation for, and may be experienced in the midst of, the intensest conflict. Remember what the purpose of this vision was—to raise up a man to fight an almost desperate fight, no metaphorical war, but one with real sharp swords against real strong enemies. The first blow in the campaign was to be struck that night. Gideon was being summoned by the vision to long years of hardship and bitter warfare, and his preparation for the conflict consisted largely in the revelation to his inmost spirit that 'Jehovah is peace.' We might rather have looked for a manifestation of the Divine nature as ready to go forth to battle with the raw levies of timid peasants. We should have expected the thought that inspired their captain to be 'The Lord is a man of war,' rather than 'The Lord is peace.' But it is not so; and therein lies the deep truth that the peace of God is the best preparation for strife. It gives courage, it leaves the heart at leisure to fling all its power into the conflict, it inspires with the consciousness of a Divine ally. As Paul puts it, in his picture of the fully-armed Christian soldier, the feet are 'shod with the preparedness of alacrity which is produced by the gospel of peace.' That will make us 'ready, aye ready' for the roughest march, and enable us to stand firm against the most violent charges of the enemy. There is no such preparation for the conflict of life, whether it be waged against our own inward evil or against opposing forces without, as to have deep within the soul the settled and substantial peace of God. If we are to come out of the battle with victory sitting on our helmets, we must go into it with the Dove of God brooding in our hearts. As the Lord said to Gideon, 'Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel, . . . have not I sent thee?'

3. And, besides this thought that the knowledge of Jehovah as peace fits us for strife, that hastily-reared altar, with its seemingly inappropriate name, may remind us that it is possible, in the midst of the deadliest hand-to-hand grip with evil, and whilst fighting the 'good fight of faith' with the most entire self-surrender to the Divine will, to bear within us, deeper than all the surface strife, that inward tranquillity which knows no disturbance though the outward life is agitated by fierce storms. Deep in the centre of the ocean the waters lie quiet, though the wildest tempests are raging above and the fiercest currents running. Over the tortured and plunging waters of the cataract there lies unmoving, though its particles are in perpetual flux, the bow of promise and of peace. So over all the rush and thunder of life there may stretch, radiant and many-coloured, and dyed with beauty by the very sun himself, the abiding bow of beauty, the emblem and the reality of the

Divine tranquillity. The Christian life is a continual warfare, but in it all 'the peace of God which passeth understanding' may 'garrison our hearts and minds.' In the inmost keep of the castle, though the storm of war may be breaking against the walls, there will be a quiet chamber where no noise of the archers can penetrate, and the shouts of the fight are never heard. Let us seek to live in the 'secret place of the Most High'; and in still communion with Him, keep our inmost souls in quiet, while we bravely front difficulties and enemies. We are God's warriors; let us see to it that on every battlefield there stands the altar 'Jehovah-shalom.'

¶ The greatest achievement of life, so far as we know it, is the production in souls of what the world's greatest book calls 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding.' Greatest, because it is the highest product of the highest forces, acting at their highest level.

There is nothing in the world or in history to compare with this. We talk of the Peace of Utrecht or of the Treaty of Paris. They are trivialities compared with the peace God creates in consecrated souls. Nature's whole scheme is a parable of this highest result. The world spinning in vacuo, its enormous burden upheld by a power invisible, is her visible sign of this crowning wonder. Peace in the battle, rest in the whirlwind—this is the miracle of the ages, the miracle wrought by Christ's Gospel in the hearts of men.[1]

Acquaint thyself with God!
  Know thou His tender love;
So shall the healing sunshine fall
  Upon thee from above.
Acquaint thyself with God!
  In Him alone is peace,—
Rest for the weary child of time,
  And everlasting bliss.[2]

[1] J. Brierley.
[2] Horatius Bonar.

## The Clothing of the Spirit.

Judg. vi. 34.—'The Spirit of the Lord clothed itself with Gideon' (RVm).

The translation, 'the Spirit of the Lord came upon' is peculiarly tame and inadequate, because the meaning of the word would rather be the Spirit of the Lord 'put on' the man: the Spirit found the human personality and put him on as a dress. The striking suggestion is that the Infinite Spirit of God is moving through the world seeking whom He may put on, and ready to invest Himself wherever there is a human being ready to be put on. His works among men must be done through men. The invisible Spirit must clothe Himself in the body of a man or woman, and must use the faculties, the brain, the heart, the will. The Spirit must be clothed upon of man.

Shall He use my personality? Shall He find, when He comes, myself sufficient garment for Him to wear? Shall I be a fitting habitation for the Spirit of God to dwell in?

If thou could'st empty all thyself of self,
Like to a shell dishabited,
Then would He find thee on the ocean shelf,
And say, 'This is not dead,'
And fill thee with himself instead,
But thou art so replete with vanity
And hast such rude activity,
  That when He comes He says,
'This is enow unto itself:
Better to let it be:
It is too small and full:
  There is no room for Me.'

1. Men are the clothes which God's spirit puts on. Dr. Timothy Richard once asked a literary man in China who had twice read through the New Testament what he considered the most striking thing in it, and he answered that the thing that seemed to him surpassingly wonderful was that men might become temples of the Holy Ghost. Truly this is so, and if the thought were not so familiar it would evoke our wonder too, and, if we really believed it, our praise. But the idea of a man's being the garment of the Spirit is even more wonderful than that of a man's

being His temple, for it gives a more intimate suggestion of the relation between them, gives greater prominence to the Holy Spirit and less glory to the man.

This is the truth of all history. It is the fact of Pentecost. Jesus had a disciple named Peter. He denied his Master. There were terrible weaknesses in Peter. But see him on the Day of Pentecost! There he stands, bold as a lion, defiant of outrage, scornful of consequences, gloriously eloquent, mightily persuasive. What was the secret? Why the transformation? The Spirit of the Lord had clothed Himself with Peter.

It was a feeble man who firmly planted Christianity in the Gentile world. Paul was a man of no appearance. There was nothing attractive about him. He was totally unlike a conqueror; yet Paul did more for Jesus than any man who ever lived. Why? He was the clothing of the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord had taken on the form and person of Paul.

2. The Spirit of God deliberately selects the men He needs. He chose Gideon. We may be sure He had every reason. He had all the men of Israel to choose from, and out of all the number He selected Gideon. Why? Gideon had all the capacities. He had mind. He could think. He knew why Israel was in serfdom and weakness. He had energy and decisiveness. Power and promptitude are the qualifications for leadership. See how he acted when the hour arrived! Without a word to anyone, he built the altar to the Lord and demolished the idolatrous usurper. And Gideon had soul. The fear of the Lord was in him. He was obedient to the Heavenly Vision and Voice. The Holy Spirit never makes a mistake. With His supernatural insight He reads the heart. Then, as soon as the man is chosen, the Spirit clothes Himself with him, fills him with superhuman courage, charges him with magnetism and daring, thrills him from head to foot with power from on high.

¶ I open, almost at random, a little book by General Gordon, who, perhaps as much as any modern, had the single-minded daring that characterized Gideon. In his *Reflections in Palestine,* he says: 'When I think of what a long wilderness journey I have had, how I have tried in vain to patch up matters, I cannot say too much on this subject. Speaking as a man, what a great blessing it would have been for some one to have said to me (though it is clear in the Scriptures), "Seek the realization of the Holy Ghost's presence in you, and leave the rest." No argument is wanted, just these words only. Believers in Christ have God the Holy Ghost living in them.' [1]

## Gideon's Sign.

Judg. vi. 37.—'Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.'

Gideon has asked for a sign. For some time he has been in communication with a world not of flesh and blood. Living in a dark age—dark with anarchy and idolatry and hostile invasion—he has been singled out as the deliverer of Israel. One daring act, the desecration and demolition of the altar of Baal, has already proved his courage and determination. Now the Spirit of God has come upon him—'clothed' him is the graphic figure of the original; clan and tribe are already summoned by his trumpet, and all is prepared for a decisive rising against the occupying host of Midian. On the very eve of the expedition Gideon asks yet one sign more. He himself prescribes the form of it. He will put a fleece of wool in the threshing-floor, and he asks that it alone may be wet with dew, the earth being dry around it. Afterwards he inverts the request. 'Let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.' He asks reverently, almost timidly, as fearing displeasure for the presumption; but no such reproof meets him: as he says, so is it. In the one case he rises early and wrings out of the fleece a bowlful of water. In the other, it is dry upon the fleece only and there is dew on all the ground.

[1] W. Y. Fullerton, *God's High Way,* 103.

Gideon's petition for a sign was not the voice of unbelief or of doubt or of presumption, but in it spoke real, though struggling, faith, faith seeking to be confirmed. Therefore it was not regarded by God as a sin. When a 'wicked and adulterous generation asked for a sign,' no sign was given it, but when faith asks for one to help it to grasp God's hand, and to go on His warfare in His strength and as His instrument, it does not ask in vain.

Gideon's anxiety was to be assured that God had chosen him, an insignificant inmate of an insignificant house, to be the champion and liberator of his country. The point on which he craved satisfaction was surely the individuality, the distinctiveness, of God's grace. If God is pleased, by this sign, to show him that He selects a particular thing or a particular person for a purpose for which all other things, all other persons, are passed by and let alone, that shall decide. Gideon will perceive that God has discriminated him, among the many thousands of Israel, as His instrument of help and emancipation to an oppressed and down-trodden people.

Here, then, we have the individuality and the independence of grace.

1. *The individuality.*—All God's great works below, all the lives of God's eminent saints below, have had this beginning. They could not shine without the kindling, and they could not run without the sending. Let us go direct to God with our spiritual yearnings and questionings. It is there, in the wilderness, in the mount, with Him alone, that we learn the secret of life and the secret of eternity. It is from such solitary communings that we return to the life and the converse of this world, the heart burning and the face shining, ready to do the Church's work and to stimulate the Church's worship. Faith is the sight of the Invisible, and communion is the communication of that sight to other men.

A man can scarcely go about his day's duty, a man cannot possibly compass a life's work, without knowing what he is to God, and what God is to him. Perhaps he ought to know. Perhaps which is truer, he might know. Yes, if he felt the pressure of the need, he would no doubt ask like Gideon, and, like Gideon, receive. But great work is not for every man; and we think to do the little work without God's sign. There is no voice to say to us, 'Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.' And so we start without it; start, to be many times baffled and driven back for the want of it; perhaps to make life itself a failure, and to hear God say of us, as of many a would-be prophet of old, 'I sent him not—yet he ran.'

Burnish thy lamps and fill with duteous care,
  Set fairest flowers there,
  And snowy linen spread.
With glowing colours make all fair to see,
Yet, when He cometh there to meet with thee,
  Be thine eyes coverèd.

The singers and the trumpeters rehearse
  Their rhythmical sweet verse
  To greet Him Who shall come.
Let all the air with quivering music thrill,
Then bid the waves of melody be still,
  And be thou dumb.

Bend o'er thy books, if haply thou mayst
    catch
  Some flame of love, to match
  Words wherewith Saints have prayed.
Then, close the leaves, and let thine own
    heart try
Its suit with God, in silence, with a sigh
  That will not be gainsaid.

Empty thy vessels all that He may fill,
  Yet leave thee thirsting still,
  Heart hungry, eyes still wet,
Because, though He is fain and very near,
Thou hast not eyes to see, nor ears to hear,
  Nor soul to love Him yet.[1]

2. *The independence.*—The individuality runs on into the independence of grace. How beautiful the figure! 'He shall come down,' the Saviour, by the Spirit, 'like the rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth.' The whole being shall drink in, shall absorb, the genial moisture; shall be penetrated, pervaded, saturated with

[1] *In the House of My Pilgrimage*, 62.

it. Such is the grace of God in man's soul. Such is the individuality, such is the independence, of that gift of Pentecost which lives on, which is renewed day by day, in them that believe. It is the possession of the man. It is his own. It is not that 'alien' thing, as our Lord calls the mammon of this world, which is at once so accidental and so fugitive and (at best) so external that, even while I have it, it is 'another's.' The grace of God is a man's own. He can 'carry it away with him when he dieth.' He shall awake with it in God's presence, and be satisfied. All around may be damp and dank, and dull and miry—his soul is still bright and buoyant. All around may be arid and parched and athirst—his soul is still like a watered garden, the dew of the new birth still upon it, beautiful, and fresh, and fertilizing.

Other men take their opinions, form their judgments, derive their influences, draw their inspirations, from earth and earth's sons; dry if the ground is dry, wet if the ground is wet; wise with the wise, froward with the froward; 'all things to all men,' but not in Paul's sense; promising, professing, worshipping to-day, because Christian people surround them; to-morrow, breaking their vows, or following the multitude to do evil. There is no safeguard for any man but this one—individual grace, individual independence. Have God in you, and you are one—one all through and always: not, like Ephraim, 'the cake not turned,' burnt on this side, sodden on that; a thing of pieces and patches.

¶ 'He is stiff as a tree and pure as a bell, and we could never bow him.' So spoke the rough soldiers of Scarborough Castle of their prisoner, George Fox, after he had been set at liberty.[1]

## God's Instruments.

Judg. vii. 7.—'By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you.'

Thirty-two thousand aggrieved and desperate men gathered themselves together at the call of Gideon, but not quite one per cent. of the muster was allowed to take part in the first step upon which victory turned. There was a double weeding out of the recruits before God could put the stamp of His approval upon the battle-roll. First of all the timid and the selfish were set free from the obligation of military service. No conscript can be permitted to share the brilliant victory which is at hand. Such honours are not for the slave. The great blow to be struck at the Midianites must be delivered by the hand of freemen. The sweepings of the press-gang are unfit material for such an enterprise. No man whose heart is on his corn-patch or vineyard need feel himself bound to go to the front.

A second winnowing of the levies which remained is more obscure in its purpose. Between the edge of the hills where the Hebrew army had arrived and the Midianite host spread on the plain below there lay a spring, a pool, and some watercourses thick with reeds. Gideon was led to take his thirsty men down to the pool on the level of the plain, and test in what manner they would take their needed refreshment in face of the enemy. Some lapped the water, that is, took it as quickly and with as little interruption of their general bearing as dogs make in drinking; but the rest bowed down on their knees to drink. Unless the test was purely arbitrary—which it is difficult to believe on any critical theory of the text—the difference between the two classes was this: some, mindful of the enemy so near and of their possible outposts ambushed in the reeds, drank hastily in a position nearest the erect, and one which did not break their vigilance; while the rest knelt down, forgetful of the foe, and drank in an attitude more comfortable, but more easy to take by surprise. This certainly would be a kind of test to appeal to the Oriental mind.

¶ I never understood these two verses till I went to Aneityum. In this country we never lap water like a dog; and when we put our hand to our mouth, we make a cup of the palm of our hand, and drink as if it were out of a small cup, in no way resembling the lapping of a dog; but these men lapped not with their tongue like a dog, but putting their hand to their mouth. However, shortly after I went to Aneityum I saw what appeared to me to give

[1] L. V. Hodgkin, *A Book of Quaker Saints*, 35.

a satisfactory solution of the difficulty. I was standing one day by the side of a stream where it was crossed by a path: a native came hurrying along, but he stopped to drink; he did not, however, bow down upon his knees as most people do among us, who wish to drink heartily, nor did he lift the water to his mouth with his hand formed cup-like as we do; but he stooped till his head was within eighteen inches or so of the water; then he began to throw up the water into his mouth with his hand as fast as a dog could lap; and he looked, as near as might be, like a dog lapping. I said at once to myself, that is the way Gideon's soldiers lapped. I had an opportunity scores of times afterwards of seeing the natives drink in the same way; and I observed that, as a general rule, it was the strong, the vigorous, and the energetic who drank water in this way; never the feeble, the lazy, or the easy-going; and the inference that I drew respecting God's intentions towards Gideon and his army was this. The Lord wished to select the very best men in that army, and with them to accomplish the deliverance of Israel.[1]

Who are the men with whom God cannot work?

1. First, 'Whosoever is fearful and trembling.' Mark the words; it is not a repetition of one thought, it is a double statement of one fact. 'Whosoever is fearful and trembling.' The men who are fearful, who are they? Men in whose vision the foe bulks larger than God. They are the fearful men; they are the men who see only the great host of Midian spreading out in the valley. They see the foe and they do not see God; they are more conscious of the foe than of God, and they are afraid naturally, necessarily. If you see the foe, not God, let one of two things happen—pray for a vision of God, or else make way for the men who see God and never ask the number of the foe. Trembling men, too, men who are afraid that if they step out into this great enterprise of Jesus Christ or commit themselves to some open outward act of loyalty they may suffer loss, men who are not prepared to suffer loss, men who think more of their own interest than of the mighty cause of righteousness and of God—these are the men of whom it says, 'Whosoever is fearful and trembling let him . . . depart early.' That was the message of old; it is the message still.

2. And then there is another class of men with whom God cannot work. At first it appears strange, and yet it is wonderfully suggestive and full of searching power. 'Every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.' Who were these men that bowed down upon their knees to drink? First of all they were men who lacked a keen sense of the urgency of their mission, and, secondly, they were men who, therefore, took unnecessary time over necessary things. This is not the picture of a drunken carousal; this is a picture of water-drinking. This is not the picture of the foolhardiness of a camp that, thinking itself safe from immediate attack, gives itself over to drinking and feasting and laughing, with drunkenness and gluttony and merriment. It is the picture of men who are getting the necessaries of life, the picture of men who must have water to drink, but they have so little true conception of the urgency of the business in hand that they are taking unnecessary time over necessary things.

God cannot work with these men. Why not? Because their attitude is not the attitude of conflict; and repletion, even of necessary things, unfits a man for hard campaigning. Those of us who have gathered at the call of God from the tribes of His spiritual Israel and are ready for the fight, those of us who cannot be charged with lack of courage, those of us who are not afraid and are not trembling, have yet one other peril against which we need to guard. What is it? That we should have a conception of our work so low as to make us take unnecessary time over necessary things. Yes, we must have our recreation; we must eat, we must sleep; we had better keep up our reading, we should not let our mind suffer—but let us keep all these in the background, and God's Kingdom and the salvation of men in the forefront. If I take the water that sometimes I must have, I will not kneel to it to fill myself

[1] J. Inglis, *Bible Illustrations from The New Hebrides*, 36.

with it, to gratify my own personal desire even with necessary things, but I will lap the water in my hand, and stand girded at the King's gate waiting for His command.

¶ Cromwell did as Gideon did. His large levies he winnowed and sifted again and again, turning away numbers of volunteers, and choosing those whom he kept not because of their strength or experience in fighting, still less for their rank or social position, but 'because they had the fear of God.' He calls them 'our handful'; and in answer to those who blamed him for his unusual rigour in recruiting he replied: 'I had rather have a plain russet-coated captain, that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows, than what you call a "Gentleman," and is nothing else.' 'Who knows what he fights for and loves what he knows'—what a fine definition it is of the true soldier! In that great war the issues were not what every man might understand, or lightly put his heart to. There was no national flag, no hereditary enemy, no obvious patriotism. The issues were spiritual and complex; needing discernment and a keen conscience. It is not different with ourselves. There is so much to cross the moral issues before us, and to distract our minds; so much that is attractive and strong to beget enthusiasm, though utterly beside the great Question; and so much more that is in its degree innocent, relevant and even necessary, yet so liable to absorb our fickle hearts, that for its sake we may forget the main ends for which we are here. God make us who are of His Church men who 'know what they fight for and love what they know,' past the love of food and drink, of comfort and of wealth![1]

## Human and Divine Co-operation.

Judg. vii. 20.—'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'

Few things are more remarkable than the power, whether for good or evil, of a short, pithy, pregnant saying. Proverbs, watchwords, party cries, have always played an important part in human affairs, and leaders of men have ever recognized their value as powerful instruments for swaying and controlling masses of people.

Unfortunately, however, their abuse is to the full as common as their use, and in art, science, theology, and above all politics, they are employed as frequently to conceal thought as to interpret it. Every politician knows that for electioneering purposes a good catchword or phrase is of more importance than a sound policy, and that, in the battle of the polls, a doubtful cause with a plausible motto will be likely to beat a cause which is sound, but nameless or awkwardly named.

For a similar reason the greatest generals of history have ever acknowledged the wisdom of putting into the mouths of their soldiers or sailors some ringing war-cry by which courage may be kindled, flagging energies rallied, and crises of fortune turned to victory. Many of the greatest battles of the world have been won by the inspiring power of a single noble word or sentence, which has had for the ears of the conquerors an intense meaning and force.

¶ No Spartan of old fought tamely who had received from wife or mother that parting mandate, 'Return either with your shield or upon it!' No Crusader in the ranks of Richard the Lion-hearted, as they charged against the hosts of Saladin, could have heard unthrilled that glorious watchword, 'Remember the Holy City!' 'God defend the right!' was the suppliant cry of youthful enthusiasm that rang out from the lips of the Black Prince at Crécy. 'St. George for England!' was the cheer with which the whole fleet saluted the flagship of Howard of Effingham, in an hour when the heart of England stood still. 'Victory or Westminster Abbey!' shouted Nelson as he boarded the great 'San Josef' in Sir John Jervis's engagement with the Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent; and in less than eight years afterwards he had signalled along the line at Trafalgar that never-to-be-forgotten message, 'England expects that every man will do his duty!'

All these watchwords had their meaning, their deep and inspiring meaning, at the time they were uttered, but none ever meant more,

[1] G. A. Smith, *The Forgiveness of Sins*, 210.

ever suggested a mightier truth, than the oldest battle cry we know of, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.' [1]

What strikes us at first as strange is that they should add the name of Gideon to the name of the Lord. Could the addition of any human name add weight to the name of God? Does not that second half of the cry rather weaken the force of the first? Is not the sword of Jehovah omnipotent? One stroke of it would annihilate any host. Why, then, add 'and of Gideon'? It is not without good reason that this addition is made. Just as great and abstract ideas have not their full influence over the mind until they are associated with some illustration, embodied in some concrete form; so the thought of God in the height and infinitude of His being has not that practical influence on the mind as a mere abstraction which it has when associated with some human agency, when brought down to the earth and near to us in the form of a man. Hence, indeed, the incarnation of God in man—the man Christ Jesus. And so the battle-cry of Christianity is not merely the sword of the Lord, but the sword of the Lord and His Christ. Besides, it was literally the arm of Gideon, as well as the arm of the Lord, that gained the victory; and therefore we have suggested to us by these words, *the union of the Divine and the human in the work of the world.*

1. *In Nature.*—God created Paradise and led man into it; but He did not leave His creature to a life of idleness to lie upon the ground and have the wealth of Nature poured at his feet. He put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it, and to keep it. The fruits of the earth were to be matured by the touch of man as well as by the power of God. As the seasons revolve in their beauty and variety, the creature has always to unite his energies with those of the Creator to bring the harvest forth. The life of Nature ebbs and flows from the low tide of winter, when the life of Nature retires, where and how we cannot tell, through the rising life of spring and the broadening life of summer up to the full yellow flood of autumn. At each of these periods the activity of man is united to, and guided by, the work of God. Man has to open the furrow, to sow the seed, to watch the growth, and to secure the harvest. He joins hands with Nature, which is joining hands with God. And his work in co-operating with God is an exercise of his head and heart as well as of his hands; for he has to plan the improvement of Nature, and to pray for a blessing on it. He is placed in sympathy with the sun and the rain and the winds, which are God's messengers. And what is all art and science but man following God, imitating God, working with God? Man looks upon the works of God; and from the union of his beholding mind with these fair forms there come forth the creations of art—the inspired poem, the pale statue, and the coloured canvas. These productions are the combined result of that inspiration which the Almighty has given and the artist's own earnest labour. The result is achieved by 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'

2. *In the administration of affairs.*—What is the true idea of government? Is it not that of a theocracy, or a world in which God is King—a world in which every king is clothed with power as Gideon was, and in which every magistrate's sword is the sword of the Lord as well? 'The powers that be' are of God, and servants of God, whether their expressed policy is to co-operate with Him, or directly to oppose Him. They are serving Him in this sense, that, through their counsels, He is working out His own purpose. Of such a king as Pharaoh God said, 'In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.' If we look to that most awful event of time—the crucifixion of the Son of Man—how marvellous the combination of elements! How strange that murderers should be the instruments of heaven, and that fiendish rage should be allowed to contribute its part towards the realization of such a result as that which was effected by the death of Christ!

If He had power and command
To make the beauty that He planned

[1] H. E. J. Bevan.

At once without this heavy hand,
Why thus by process long and slow
With warp of pain and woof of woe
Weaves He life's piecey fabric so?

Yet in the lovely fragments left
Littered upon the broken weft,
In beauty beautifully bereft,
I saw with still entrancèd soul,
Like one who sees fresh dreams unroll,
More than perfection of the whole!

The dule and sadness of our lot
Like passing clouds I had forgot.
Even God's wrath I heeded not.
But in an ecstasy I cried,
'Beauty hath more than justified
What means soe'er He hath applied!'[1]

3. *In the individual life.*—Conversion is pre-eminently a work of God. It is a new creation, and God is the Creator. We are born again of God. 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.' And as the Christian advances in the experience of the Divine life, he is more and more ready to admit that the circumstances and conditions which concurred in his becoming a new creature were primarily of God's ordering. At the same time, it is no less clear in Scripture that conversion is a work in which man himself must play a part. There is an act of the Divine will; but there is also an act of the human will. We are 'justified by faith'; and faith is an act of the mind. The Christian knows by experience that, in turning to the new life, he consciously decided for God; and as he walks forward in the path of that life, he is, as it were, keeping pace with God. Every good word spoken is both the word of God, and the word of man. Every righteous action performed is a fruit of both the Divine Spirit and the human spirit. Every true and believing prayer, is at once an inspiration of man, and an inspiration of God. In the warfare of the soul, the Divine arm and the human arm must both be lifted against the foe; and it is still 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon' that gains the victory.

[1] W. Weaving, *Heard Melodies*, 51.

¶ This day, the feast of my holy patron, St. Jerome, I finish the third day of my noviciate, and now despairing of myself after so many attempts and so many failures, I cast myself into the most merciful arms of Jesus, and resolve once more to begin in a new way, a way hitherto untried by me—that of the love and imitation of Jesus, and hence necessarily the way of Holy Cross. Wherefore I desire henceforth, taking *the love of Jesus for my motive, the contemplation of Jesus for my guide,* and seeing that the love and knowledge of Him are to be had only from above, from 'the Father of lights,' *prayer in all times and places* (but above all in the times specially appointed thereto) for help and strength and perseverance, to enter on the Royal Way of the Cross, 'always and every hour, in small things as in great,' *mortifying my proud and sensual dispositions:* endeavouring especially to unite myself with Our Lord in His hidden life (His life corresponding to my age and to my humble condition as a novice), with Him trying *to live in obscurity,* and to avoid the notice of others, even as I have hitherto sought it, and *to subject myself to all* even as He was subject to His own creatures.[1]

4. *In the work of spreading the gospel.*—The ground of the gospel is the ineffable union of God and man in our Saviour. When the hosts of Midian and Amalek came upon the land of Canaan, it was by a human agent that the Lord smote and routed them; and the influences of evil which have come upon the world are still to be counteracted by human means. The Holy Spirit is not, in ordinary experience, sent directly to each individual, apart from means; but through our fellowmen, and the events of Providence. God incarnated Himself in One man, and He communicated the truth to others, who in their turn transmitted it to their fellows, and so the Church was formed and extended. God is pleased to leave the interests of His Kingdom, to some extent, in the hands of that Church—not working apart from it, but coming down and dwelling in the midst of it,

[1] Charles Hargrove, in L. P. Jacks, *From Authority to Freedom*, 143.

using the hands, and hearts, and tongues of its members, and working through human arrangements and associations. But, lest the human should become self-reliant, agencies are allowed to grow weak with age, and forms of work to become mechanical, until a new spring-time of grace gives all to feel that God is the Supreme Worker. In the established machinery of religion we have always evidence that man is at work; but we require reformations and revivals to fill us afresh with the conviction that God also is ever working over all and in all. And when a reformation does come, how many voices do we hear, some saying, 'This is the work of God'; others 'It is only a work of man'; the one pointing to the evident triumphs achieved, and the other to the errors and defects which may also be only too visible; the fact being that it is a true work, because it is God's, but an imperfect work, because it is also man's. The imperfection of the human work is, however, no proof that along with it a Divine work is not also going on.

¶ A Revival quickens dead men, touches men's imaginations, and sets loose their hearts. . . . There is a Divine mystery about Revivals. God's sovereignty is in them. Just when His time comes, 'a nation shall be born in a day,' and it gives us a heart of hope to think of that. It is in His hand. . . . I may not live to see it. But the day will come when there will be a great Revival over the whole earth. He has said: 'I come to give you life, and that more abundantly.' Go on and preach His Gospel, for He has it in His seven-sealed book that there will be a time of refreshing till all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God. See that you are doing your utmost to hasten on that kingdom. For whatever else is shipwrecked on the face of God's earth the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ is sure to come into harbour.[1]

In the spread of the gospel the great instrumentality used is the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit; that word which is 'quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' This all-prevailing weapon is Divine. The Bible is the God-inspired record of eternal life. It is also human; for human fingers wrote it, human hearts coloured and shaped it, and human lives contributed largely to its material contents. As the Bible, then, is borne aloft in the conflict of the Church, the war-cry still is, 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.' And when the day shall come in which He of whom Gideon was the type shall finally 'put to flight the armies of the aliens,' with the 'sharp two-edged sword that goeth out of his mouth,' that glorious victory will be the conjoint result of influences in the highest sense Divine, and in the deepest sense human.

[1] *Alexander Whyte*, 101.

## Faint Yet Pursuing.

Judg. viii. 4.—'And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing.'

Gideon, with his brave band of three hundred men, was in pursuit of the flying Midianites. He had struck a sudden blow with a very wonderful effect. He had won the victory not with sword and spear on a hard-fought field, but with trumpets and shouts, and the flashing out of three hundred lights from broken pitchers. But the victory won thus easily was yet won by brave men, who would have fought if their leader had brought them hand to hand with the enemy. They are hasting on to fight, if need be, now. Every term of the sentence shows their courage. 'They came to Jordan.' Men less earnest in their work, and less brave in its pursuit, would have paused there, would have said, 'Here is a natural barrier. Here let us end the chase. Now God gives us safety and rest!' But 'Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over': passed over, not in strength, but faint, 'faint, yet pursuing.' He had an end to accomplish, and as long as he could lead the way, or his men could follow him, he would march to that end.

'Faint, yet pursuing'—it is the war-shout of victorious men. It is not the sigh of

valorous souls well-nigh defeated in the battle of life yet rallying their despairing energies for one struggle more. It is the exultant song of conquerors seeking more worlds to conquer. These men were flushed with success. They were weary; but it was through piling triumph on triumph. They had driven their enemies before them. They had scattered them as the dust of the highway. Yet still they pursued, and, determined that nothing should block their onward march, pressed forward to greater deeds. They were faint, it is true, faint with the strenuous effort which had brought victory to their banners, yet pursuing greater glories than the glory they had won.

It is a great deal better to be strong than to be faint, every way better. It is good to see the strong man in his freshness ready for the race, bent, eager, waiting, watchful, ready to spring like an arrow from the bow. But there is one thing that we praise more than that. It is when, away at the end of the course, we see the man faint, gasping, dazed, with head bent and breath spent, pushing on. That is the picture. The will is fixed, the purpose steady. There is the pluck, the dogged tenacity that holds on.

'Faint, yet pursuing.' It is an inspiring phrase. And what fine exemplifications of it are to be seen around us every day! Here is one, perhaps, to whom the task of a whole life has been such as he is ill-fitted for both by nature and by opportunity. He would never have chosen it for himself, but he has to keep at it in season and out of season, in sickness and in health, in evil report and good. Never from the first has he had what might be called a fair start; he has always been handicapped by circumstances or thwarted by other wills than his own. No sooner has he turned the corner than he finds a new obstacle to surmount, a new difficulty added that he had not foreseen. He has got rid of some burdens only to find others thrust upon him. Trouble comes, not of his own making; sickness invades the home: or somebody dies and forthwith he is saddled with new responsibilities. The trying family has got placed in life at last, and that worry is over only to make way for a greater still. One disappointment crowds upon another: one expectation fails of fulfilment and then the next. And so it goes on. Sometimes he loses heart and gives way in secret, but must—absolutely must—keep cheerful before others. For their sake he has sometimes to pretend what he does not quite feel; he has to stick to his guns in the face of odds that never seem to lessen, of a foe that never tires. What is he to do it with? He often asks himself whether he can stand it for ever. Perhaps he feels thoroughly sick of it, yet knows he cannot get away; in his weaker moments he perhaps tells himself he must give up, while knowing perfectly well all the time that he will do the very opposite.

¶ I shall never forget the heartening effect once produced on me by the utterance of a single sentence when I was one of a very small company met to consider a serious personal matter mainly concerning one of those present. The principal speaker was in a very sad mood, and confessed to us that the greatest temptation of his life, a temptation which practically never left him, was that of deserting the exceedingly difficult post he held. He said it would make all the difference if that temptation could be removed; it was a constant menace to him; for he was afraid that some day it would get the better of him, and he would go. 'Yes,' said another—and this was the observation I mean—'but a good many years have passed and you have never done it yet.' The remark was illuminating; it was like a beam of light darting through a murky cloud. It was the exact truth. 'Faint, yet pursuing,' that man had played his part faithfully. He could not say like Browning's hero that he had 'never doubted clouds would break,' but it was absolutely true that he had 'never turned his back, but marched breast forward.' And I wonder if that is not even finer than never doubting, never entertaining a single misgiving as to the issue of the conflict.[1]

[1] R. J. Campbell, in *The Christian Commonwealth*, February 17, 1915, p. 253.

## The Strength of Manhood.

Judg. viii. 21.—'As the man is, so is his strength.'

The Midianites, a warlike Arabian race, invaded the fat country of Palestine every year, especially about the time of harvest; and an unmitigated nuisance they were to the people of Israel. Like the Bedouins of the present day, they would come down in great hordes, trampling the fields, plundering the vineyards and gardens, and laying hands on cattle, grain and everything they could carry away. This sort of thing had gone on for seven years, and the people could endure it no longer; yet no leader seemed to arise who was equal to the occasion. At last the Lord summoned Gideon to the task.

The Midianites were defeated, and fled towards the Jordan, only to find their path of flight intercepted; for the Ephraimites had seized the lower fords, and cut off all who attempted to escape. The upper fords were held by Gideon himself, who followed in pursuit of two eminent Midianitish chiefs, named Zeba and Zalmunna. In those days eminent captives taken in war were generally put to death; and no doubt Zeba and Zalmunna made sure that if they were taken prisoners that would be their fate. Gideon had mercifully intended to spare the lives of these Arab sheikhs. But he is smarting under the loss of his elder brothers, and he has a suspicion as to who it was that shed their blood. The first question he puts is, 'What manner of men were those whom ye slew at Tabor?' The reply of the haughty chiefs was significant. 'As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.' 'My own brothers!' exclaimed Gideon, as the dark scowl gathered upon his brow. 'Jether, my firstborn, get up and slay them, and avenge your uncles' blood.' But the lad feared, for he was but a beardless youth. There is a moment of terrible suspense. Like noble sons of the desert, Zeba and Zalmunna prepare for their fate without fear or weakness. But, shrinking from the thought of meeting death at the hand of that smooth-cheeked boy, and looking upon the massive form of the stalwart, lordly Gideon, they entreat that he himself shall be the executioner; adding, in the words of the text, 'For as the man is, so is his strength.'

Since they must die they would rather fall by the hand of a strong man, and a great commander such as Gideon, than by the hand of a mere stripling like his son; and that, first, because his stout arm would be more likely to despatch them quickly, and save them from a painful and lingering death; and, secondly, because such an end would be less ignominious. It was on the same principle that, at a later date, as recorded in the next chapter, Gideon's own son Abimelech, when he met with a fatal blow at the tower of Thebez by a stone thrown from a woman's hand, entreated his armour-bearer instantly to despatch him with his sword: 'Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him.' So, these bronzed warriors of Midian shrank from the thought of being slain by a lad, and begged his strong-armed father to give the blow. Was it an ancient proverb of the East that leaped to their lips, as they added, 'For as the man is, so is his strength'?

1. As a man is *physically,* so is his strength. If we are to estimate him by his muscular strength, we must take into account his bodily form, his age, his health, his build, his stature. Gideon belonged to the order of Nature's nobility. He was a man of splendid figure and bearing, of a tall and commanding presence. That arm of his could do mighty execution, whether it wielded the flail, or the sword, or the prickly branches of the thorn-trees at Succoth. Whatever work it undertook, it would do with thoroughness and effect. Now, it is perfectly true that we cannot give to ourselves a handsome mien, or add one cubit to our stature; nevertheless, it is equally true —and of none more true than young men— that we can do much to promote our health, to build up our constitution, and even to give dignity to our physical presence. By a regular life, by moderation in diet, by scrupulous temperance, by due bodily exercise, by habits of order and cleanliness, every one of us can do not a little in this direction; and in many

a case it is easy to perceive, on our first glance at a man, whether he is loose and slovenly in his habits, or orderly and regular.

¶ It is considered correct, I understand, to say that one should not judge by outward appearances; but how can you help it? Envelopes will talk! I can never forget a tremendous impression made upon my mind a few weeks after I went to live in London. I was barely seventeen. I was feeling horribly lonely, and, on all sorts of subjects, I was desperately groping my way. One wet night, in passing down the Strand, I saw hundreds of people crowding into Exeter Hall. Moved by a sudden impulse, I followed. The adventure promised a new experience, and I was specializing in novelties. Then came the impression! It was not created by the arguments of the speakers, for, as yet, not one of them had spoken. It was created by their personal appearance. The chair was occupied by Sir Stevenson Arthur Blackwood—'Beauty Blackwood' as he was called—and addresses were delivered by the Revs. Newman Hall, Donald Fraser, Marcus Rainsford and Archibald G. Brown. I could imagine nothing more picturesque than those five knightly figures—tall, dignified, and stately. The spectacle completely captivated me. I gazed spellbound. Whilst the great audience sang the opening hymn, my eyes roved from one handsome form to another, bestowing upon each the silent homage of boyish hero-worship. This happened more than thirty years ago; yet I am confident that I could easily write out a full and accurate report of each of the speeches delivered that night. So favourably had the envelopes impressed my mind! And so effectively had they prepared me for the letters they contained! [1]

2. As a man is *intellectually*, so is his strength. The word 'strength' here means power of work, capacity for accomplishing the ends of life, and making the world the better for one's existence. During the past hundred years, no proverb has been more often quoted, as none has been more largely illustrated, than the pithy aphorism of Lord Bacon, 'Knowledge is power'—a truth to which a wiser than Bacon virtually gave expression 3,000 years ago, when Solomon wrote: 'If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength; but wisdom is profitable to direct.' This age of keen competition demands men of brains: and it is mind that conquers matter. Throughout this little island of ours, during the week, machinery will be set in motion doing the work of five millions of men; in other words, the machines of England and Scotland will this week weave as much cloth, and prepare as much food, and supply the world's inhabitants with as many commodities as, if made by hand, would require the combined active industry of the whole adult population of the globe. Thus intellect becomes an equivalent for strength, and mind means money. In real power of work, the skilled artisan leaves the mere labourer far behind, and the thoughtful clerk the mere mechanical penman; so that as a man is in intelligence, so is his strength.

3. But this old adage admits of a yet higher application. Indeed, in no sense is it more widely and markedly true than in this: as a man is *morally*, so is his strength. Character and faith, more than anything else, determine our power of overcoming difficulty and of accomplishing good. This is the sure gauge of our personal force in society and in the world. Without a moral backbone we may as well be jelly fish, for any real, solid good we shall accomplish. There must be a foundation of stern principle, or we shall be weak as water. A man with a resolute conscience will always be a power. Of course conscience may be prejudiced and perverted: and we must remember this, and neither attempt to make our own conscience a law unto others, nor judge them harshly because their standard is different from ours. Sternly upright men may have crotchets, at which other men, equally good, can only laugh. Pascal truly said that the meaning of the word 'character' varies with the parallels of latitude and longitude. Our moral sense may be drugged by the air it breathes, as men get giddy in wine vaults without tasting alcohol.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Rubble and Roseleaves*, 19.

¶ The supreme question for modern civilization is the formation of character. Of what use are our material advancements if they leave only a dismal emptiness within? Of what use carrying the people at sixty miles an hour if they are fools when they get into the train and fools when they get out? Of what use our latest telegraphy if it flings across the world no better news than of commercial frauds, of society intrigues, of the follies of the rich and the discontent of the poor? You may start your common schools, and train the children into clever devils—to thieve better, to lie more plausibly. You may teach them to read that they may saturate their minds with filth. Any education that is not first and foremost a training in character is only a preparation for villainy's more effectual service. A cultivated scoundrel may do more harm with a stroke of his pen than a score of burglars will accomplish in a twelvemonth. Are we training the English soul to-day? Can we say of England what Milton said of her in his time?—'Let not England forget her precedence in teaching nations how to live.' For England has been built on character; on such conformity as she has attained to the inmost nature of things; on such obedience as she has shown to the laws of the soul. For her, and for ourselves, there is only one way of the conquering life. It is the way which the New Testament discloses—of service, purity, and love.[1]

4. And finally, as the man is in *faith*, so is his strength. Ah! that's the main point. What a work that brave soul Gideon accomplished, all through unshaken confidence in his God! Not by human means verily. Like the barley-cake of which one of his soldiers dreamed that it tumbled into the hosts of Midian and fell upon a tent and overturned it, his faith demolished every difficulty that stood in the way; until, with a mere handful of half-starved men, he so routed and scattered the hosts of Midian and Amalek (though they 'lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude'), that, as the sacred historian tells us, 'they lifted up their heads no more.'

Be that faith yours, young men, and you will be strong, and will overcome the wicked one. There is no strength in the world to compare with that which faith imparts, especially the faith which lays hold of a risen and all-sufficient Redeemer. The splendid undertakings of an Alexander, a Hannibal, a Cæsar, are nothing to the achievements which it has accomplished. Beside it the most glorious conquests of history, those over armed squadrons of Persians, of Gauls, of Romans, sink into insignificance. For before it mountains of difficulty have been removed and cast into the sea; it has burst open gates of iron, has arrested the sun in its race, stopped the course of the moon, muzzled raging lions, and quenched the flames of fire; it has mastered legions of passions, quelled the turbulence of lust, overcome the world, driven the devil to flight, and thrown open an entrance to the palaces of heaven! Be that faith yours; and all the Zebas and Zalmunnas of fierce temptation will fall before you; your life will be spent to purpose; and, like Gideon, you will serve your country and your generation by the will of God.

[1] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-day*, 87.

## 'I Pray Thee, Have Me Excused.'

Judg. ix. 7.—'And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.'

The fable of Jotham belongs to one of the most striking epochs in the history of the Judges. Gideon's career had just exemplified in its noblest form the true mission and character of the Judge, as a deliverer and ruler raised up by the call, and anointed by the Spirit of the Lord. But his establishment of his city as an unauthorized sanctuary, rivalling the glory of Shiloh in the land of the proud and hostile tribe of Ephraim, and perhaps the assumption of some royal state (marked by the polygamy noted in Judg. viii. 30), had already suggested to the Israelites the first beginnings of that aspiration after an established royalty which finally led to the demand for a king in the days of Samuel. Of this aspiration the ambition of Abimelech took base advantage

through the help of his own kindred in Shechem. Shechem was, indeed, a chief city within the territory of Ephraim; and it is possible that he appealed to the Ephraimite jealousy of the house of Gideon. But it seems, also, not improbable that his mother belonged to the Canaanite race, still allowed to remain in Ephraim, and that his usurpation represents an uprising of that race, gathering strength from the apostasy of Israel to the native idolatry of Baal-berith (Judg. viii. 33), and making the idol-temple their rallying-point. The usurpation is sealed by the murder of all the sons of Gideon except Jotham, who escapes and hides himself. Suddenly he appears again among the people. It was (says Josephus) at a festival, when the Israelites were gathered outside the city on the slope of Gerizim—perhaps it might be at the coronation festival—under the 'oak of the pillar (or garrison) in Shechem.' He stands above the people on the rocky summit, looking down upon the city some 800 feet below, speaks his word of rebuke and reproach, and then vanishes again.

The fable—the delight of children and of childlike minds, and accordingly the ornament of the earlier stages of all literatures—conveys to us a simpler and less perfect form of teaching than the true parable. It is simpler, because it arrests the attention by its very strangeness and occasional grotesqueness of treatment; because it forces the sense of a hidden meaning on the most careless mind. It is less perfect, because the analogy on which it depends is less complete and less solid. It rests, indeed, to some extent, on the same principle as underlies the true parable—the belief in unity of law pervading all the various phases of God's Providence. But, instead of being content with analogy in this respect between the lower and the higher kingdom of Nature, it fancifully assumes identity; it attributes to the animals, or even to the trees, the actual ideas and moral impulses and responsibilities of men. The result is that its scope is almost always limited to the lower spheres of human life, in which man rises comparatively little above the animal creation; and even in these it so often provokes a smile by a sense of incongruity that the sense of the ludicrous has been sometimes defined as of the essence of the fable. Accordingly, it is fit to convey only the most obvious lessons lying on the very surface of experience and thought. For its own purpose it is used in all ancient literature, but it is especially a favourite vehicle of the wisdom of the East.

The true fable is but scantily used in Holy Scripture; in the mouth of the prophet it is apt to melt into the more serious allegory. We see, without surprise, that it has no place in the teaching of the Great Master, who delighted to speak in parable. We feel that this form of parable has nothing of that higher simplicity of depth and perfection which is necessarily the characteristic of a doctrine that is to be final; nor does it accord with the deep, though serene, gravity of the teaching which has to look into and through the most solemn realities of time and eternity.

1. The lesson of Jotham's parable is that the highest places in the State should be given only to the best men; that the bramble should never be permitted to usurp the place of the olive or the vine, and that the vine and the olive should not shrink from the duties which their very sweetness and fatness impose upon them. When men of noble character, and great parts, and refined culture withdraw from public life, and leave the administration of public affairs to the ignorant and greedy and unscrupulous; or when men who are worthless as brambles, simply because they have a long purse or a long pedigree (and brambles are at least as old as the Curse), are thrust into seats of honour and responsibility—then we may predict, with Jotham, that a fire will break forth from them in which much that we love will be consumed. If Gideon will not rule, and Abimelech will; or if we are base enough to prefer a base Abimelech before a noble Gideon, we may be very sure that evil will come of it, and not good; we shall not gather grapes off briars, nor figs off thistles; we may confidently look for thorns and flames in lieu of wine and honey.

¶ The greatest fact of modern history, we are told, is the French Revolution. We are

taught to mourn over its failures, to shudder at its 'excesses.' But what was the French Revolution? In one sentence, it was the issue of fires from the Bramble-king, fires that blazed sky-high from hell to heaven and consumed the cedars of Lebanon. Every function that belonged to place and power, to responsibility and rule, had been abdicated by olive, fig, and vine, by noble, priest, and king, in the entirely damnable lust of ease. Place only meant pillage. Power was plunder. Rule spelt rapine, and responsibility was robbery. Priests were perjurers. Monarchs were murderers. Bishops—overseers, shepherds whose business was to overlook the flock—overlooked them only to find the fattest to be shorn or slain. Rulers, the 'fathers of their people,' devoured their own children like Homer's 'people-eating kings.' And then, when olive, fig, and vine were rotten in their own fat and fruit, what wonder that the trees of the forest sought bramble and thorn, called to the Dantons, the Robespierres, and the Marats, to come to wave to and fro over them? If the son of St. Louis turned cur, let the people take refuge with jackal and wolf![1]

2. But it is not this moral that chiefly commends Jotham's parable to our thoughts. It contains a lesson still more pertinent to the time: it warns us against one of the special and pressing dangers of the Church. There is, perhaps, no danger more threatening to the efficiency and peace of the Christian Church in these realms than the growing tendency of men of culture and refinement to decline from its communion and service. The best men, those most fitted to guide and instruct the Church, too often either are outside its pale, or, if within it, are content to seek their own growth in knowledge or grace rather than to teach in the pulpit and the school, or to visit the poor and sick, or to conduct any of the enterprises by which the Church seeks to save and serve the world. They try, they tell us, to be good and to do good, to live out the Christian law in their homes and in their business; some of them try also to hold communion with the wise of past ages, to grow by study, and thought, and prayer into more perfect men; but they do not care to busy themselves in the toils of active service, to quit the seclusion of the home and the study for the laborious repetitions of school and church work. All that, they hold, would be for them a waste of time which they can occupy to better purpose. In brief, it is to-day as it was in the days of Jotham: the Olive says, 'My veins run oil; shall I leave my fatness to run up and down for the other trees?' And the Fig says, 'My veins run honey; shall I leave my sweetness to run up and down for the other trees?' And the Vine says, 'My veins run wine; shall I leave my good cheer to run up and down for the other trees, and, above all, for these miserable brambles who will turn upon me with all their thorns?'

Can the Church get on on these terms? Nay, God has appointed us to live not single and disunited lives, but a common life. We are a fellowship, a communion; each needs help, and should give help. Those who, on plea of refinement and self-culture, excuse themselves from active participation in the common work of the Church injure the Christian community in many ways. First of all, they leave the Church to be governed and represented before the world by men of less wisdom than themselves, who hinder even when they mean to help. Then, too, the Church within itself is not so well taught and ruled, nor so full of grace and peace as it might be, were those who are most competent to help to yield their help: brambles often kindle fires where olives would yield oil and vines give wine. Moreover, they sin against the Divine law which binds gifts to service, which commands us to use for the common good whatever talents we have received. Last of all, they miss their own special aim, they mar even their own self-culture; for all God's gifts thrive with us and make increase to themselves in proportion as we are faithful stewards of them and use them for the general good.

¶ The following indictment from the pen of Dr. Aked may seem in some respects rather strong; but there is not a little truth in many of his statements: 'It is probably safe to say that there is not a Sunday School in Great

[1] C. F. Aked, *The Courage of the Coward*, 212.

Britain which is efficient. Nearly always the premises are inadequate. The funds are inadequate. The teaching staff is inadequate. The books are inadequate. The actual teaching is inadequate. Everything is inadequate about it. The Sunday School is the home of reaction and obscurantism. Thoughts which have been accepted by every educated pulpit in every denomination in the country encounter in the Sunday School an impenetrable mass of matter. Doctrines which are heard no longer from any educated preacher in the land are taught in the Sunday School, for the children to unlearn as soon as they listen to the first street-corner sceptic. Usually, the best people in the Churches do not come into the Sunday Schools. Those with the most money, and therefore able to help in many kindly ways; those with the best homes, and able to invite there the children who have less home-life of their own; those with most leisure, and therefore able to take a personal interest in the welfare of each child; those with the best education and with trained ability—all refuse to enter the doors of the Sunday School. Perhaps twenty per cent. of the teaching staff of the Sunday Schools of the country may be drawn from these more favoured classes. Not less than eighty per cent. has been made up of the humbler workers. For them, all honour and all praise! I know no Christian worker whom I hold in higher honour. They do their work under every disadvantage; their rewards are long in coming; their praise is not of men. All honour to them! But their honour is the shame of men and women better qualified to do their work. Do you wonder that the Sunday School is a problem? The Sunday School is not a problem where the Church believes in it. It is, and it will remain, a problem where olive, fig, and vine decline to leave their fatness and their fruit and relegate the functions which belong to them to the bramble-bush.'[1]

[1] *The Courage of the Coward*, 208.

## In Distress.

**Judg. xi. 7.—'Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?'**

We have no difficulty in believing this inquiry to have been made. Criticism retires from this interrogation with nothing to do. The question was certainly asked; it is asked every day; it is a revelation of human nature on both sides. Jephthah had not been well used by his kinsmen. He was an illegitimate child; he was hated by those who were in the true succession. They took hold of him and put him out; they drove him away. There was a brand upon him, a stigma, a mark they could not tolerate.

Into the wilderness Jephthah was driven. But the time of stress came upon the sons of the house, and when the fight went against them they said, 'Is not Jephthah a mighty man of valour? After all, is he responsible for his identity? Is he not hidden in the land of Tob?' So when the children of Ammon made war against Israel they sent for their big quasi-brother. When they came, Jephthah—great giant, soft in heart as a woman, yet with an iron fist and a voice that was not without accent of reproach—said to them, 'Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?' There was a latent rebuke in the inquiry.

1. God might say this to us all. He might look down upon us when we are upon our unwilling knees and say, 'What! you there? what do you want?' Then would come out some tale of pitiable necessity, the all-begging petition, the outworn supplication for something. The suppliant is in distress, the fight has gone hard against him, he has but little bread at home, his house is desolate, his life is in front of him like an angry cloud; and, behold, he prayeth! What a mockery of reverence! what an irony palpable and inexcusable! An atheist might pray so; a man who had never heard of God except remotely might assume that very attitude and lift to Heaven that very look, partly of vacancy,

partly of expectancy. That is an atheist's poor prayer. Why do we not come to God in happier circumstances with psalm and song of adoration? Why do we not praise Him on the lute and harp? Why do we not praise Him with the sound of the trumpet? These questions should get into our hearts very deeply.

If God does not put the inquiry, He makes the announcement; He says in the Prophets again and again, 'In the time of their distress they will call upon me.' He knows exactly when they will come, under what circumstances they will petition the throne. All the intricacies and mysteries, all the deviousness of the heart's way, God knows; and when He sees whole hosts of men turning away from Him, He says, 'They will return.' When, Lord? In stress of weather. When the first-born child dies they will begin to pray; when the fortune withers they will ask the way to church; when health declines they will send for the holy man and ask him with inexcusable impudence if he can pray. It is along the pathways of darkness and storm that men come home. In the time of youth and strength and prosperity, in full-blooded health, when life is full of beauty and of promise, let us surprise God. He permits Himself to be surprised by unexpected prayer.

¶ Pride of strength makes us forget the rock out of which we were hewn. This is a most common and insidious peril. Our weakness helps our remembrance of God; our strength is the friend of forgetfulness. Perhaps this is most apparent in our physical weakness. In our weakness we remember the Lord, and the dim things of the unseen come clearly into view. But when our strength is regained the vivid vision fades again, and is sometimes entirely lost. And so our strength is really our drug. It is an opiate which ministers to spiritual forgetfulness. And so it is with every kind of strength. Frailty in any direction makes us lean upon the power of the Almighty, and in every frailty our remembrance of Him is keen and clear. But our strength helps to create a feeling of independence, and we become unmindful of our God. And therefore it is that a man who never knows weakness has a stupendous task in maintaining communion with God.[1]

2. The Bible might put that inquiry to us—Why are ye come to me now that ye are in distress? We keep the Bible for dark days. We are very well versed in the Psalms; we know nothing about the earlier Books, but we have had so much affliction that we have almost committed many of the psalms to memory. Our Bible tells our history. It opens of itself at certain places—not at Genesis, but at the Psalms. We have had trouble, we have had loss; we know the grim presence of Death, we have heard his footfall on the stair. If the Bible were a reproachful book, how it could look up at us and burn us with its look as it says, 'Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress? You never read me in sunshine; you never read me through. I am not a Bible in parts, I am the Bible, the Book, one Book, a continuous, augmenting, ever ascending strain of music. What have you done but take out a minor note here and there because you are sad and in trouble? You do not know me,' the Bible says, and says it not resentfully, but truly, revealingly, to your own soul. No man knows the Bible who has read it only in verses and in texts: he knows it who, beginning at the beginning, has gone through to find that there is no end.

¶ My life is a full one, but I keep time sacred each morning for some careful reading of the New Testament. I use a large copy, and I keep a pencil in hand to make notes in the margin, or to draw lines of connection across the page. I don't make it a duty to read a fixed quantity, such as a chapter, but to read *some portion* carefully, as it comes in order.

At night with the Old Testament I do the same. About two years on the average carries me through the Book. My mother taught me to read it through, and I have done it all my life, till my reading seems as natural a thing in the day as my meals.[2]

3. Yet blessed be God for this subtle min-

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Things that Matter Most*, 31.
[2] *The Life of H. C. G. Moule*, 312.

istry of pain and sorrow in life! Distress is a kind of veiled angel that brings many to the sanctuary, to the altar, to the oracle of revelation, and to the very gate of heaven. We should not have been so religious if we had not been so distressed. Distress gets a man out of himself; distress teaches a man that his true help is not really within his own nature, but beyond it. So long as we are sufficient in ourselves, so long as we are able men, clever men, sagacious men, we shall get nothing from God. He gives nothing to ability. He lives to give to those who have nothing, yet who cry for Himself.

How was it when they went to the Saviour? 'They brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy'—'and He said unto them, Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?' No, no! 'He healed them.' Not a word of reproach, no saying, 'You should have eaten less, you should have drunk less, you should have paid more attention to your health; all these things come of the violation of the laws of Nature, and you are responsible for these violations.' Not a word. How does Jephthah stand against that picture? How does Jesus Himself figure in the presence of this contrast? Behold, how He lifts Himself up in ineffable majesty! Without reproaching them, 'He healed them.' He came to seek and to save that which was lost; He said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It is there that we see the Deity of Christ; it is there that our Lord separates Himself from all other men, and stands alone in the dignity of His Godhead. How like the God revealed in Isaiah!—'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Jephthah reproached, Jephthah bargained: Christ does not reproach, Christ does not bargain: Christ heals.

O Jesus, full of pardoning grace,
More full of grace than I of sin,
Yet once again I seek Thy face;
Open Thine arms and take me in,
And freely my backslidings heal,
And love the faithless sinner still.

Thou know'st the way to bring me back,
My fallen spirit to restore;
O, for Thy truth and mercy's sake,
Forgive, and bid me sin no more;
The ruins of my soul repair,
And make my heart a house of prayer.[1]

## Jephthah.

Judg. xi. 30.—'Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord.'

Jephthah was one of those unhappy men who enter on life under the ban and burden of illegitimate birth. Such men often develop great daring and force of character, probably because they learn very early that their only helper is themselves. They also, not unnaturally, often assume a hostile attitude to society. Not unnaturally, for they find themselves cursed for a sin that is not theirs, and it would be more than human if they did not resent the injustice of their position. We may easily trace in this story the development of each of these characteristics. Jephthah is expelled from his father's house, and forbidden to share in his father's heritage. He at once retires to the desert, like another Ishmael, and sets about building up his life after his own fashion. He becomes a leader of the discontented. He reigns as a kind of king over a host of bandits. This is the price that society pays for injustice—from its profligacies come its scourges.

But Jephthah, in spite of all that might have soured him, retained a noble heart. He is an outlaw indeed, but a great outlaw who excites admiration. And he is a patriot, who loves his land, though it has done little for him. So the time comes at last when there is a great national emergency which needs an intrepid hero, and the thoughts of men turn instinctively to Jephthah. He is desired by the leaders of his people to assume captaincy over the army, and he knows himself equal

[1] Charles Wesley.

to the task. This outlaw of the desert at once reveals himself, not only as a born leader of men, but as a skilled diplomatist and a great soldier; one of those firm, wise, and courageous men who in times of national panic become popular heroes.

The interest of Jephthah's story is moral and spiritual, and it centres round what is called his rash vow. War under the best circumstances is a gigantic gamble, in which the stakes are not only human lives but national destinies. No great general, however brave and sagacious he may be, can ever be absolutely sure of success. In all warfare what seems chance plays a great part, often so unexpected a part that all the calculations of the wisest strategy are upset by the event. Hence the greatest soldier, surest of himself and of his cause, can scarcely meet the dawn of battle without solemn thoughts and noble fears. These thoughts and fears often run in the direction of superstition. Omens are observed, sacrifices are made, vows are registered. Jephthah is in this respect the child of his age. Let it be observed that he does no unusual thing in making a vow to God upon the eve of battle; many centuries later the great soldiers of Rome and Greece did the same. Jephthah's vow is recorded in this chapter: 'And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.'

1. Now it is clear that this cannot be called a rash vow; on the contrary, it is a reasoned and deliberate vow. Jephthah shows himself conscious of a great spiritual truth, namely, that all true service of God involves sacrifice. He has been elected to a great part in the destiny of his nation; but he knows that he is elected to sorrow. He does not expect God to give him all he asks without a return on his part. What it is that God may demand of him he does not know, but he knows that, whatever it is, God has the right to ask it. This is a way of thought very uncommon in our day. We assume that to be elected to the Kingdom of God means that we are elected to unbroken happiness, and that henceforth we are secure against the graver vicissitudes of life; but the great heroes of faith and action have never reasoned thus. Can you point to any man elected to do great service for God who has not also had to make great sacrifices? What of John the Baptist, of Paul, of Jesus? Not only were they not immune from the more tragic vicissitudes of life, but their whole lives were sacrifice. The more God gave of power, the more He demanded in submission: from John the torture of a prison, from Paul a life of insult and physical agony, from Christ the endurance of the Cross. Nor did Christ leave us in doubt for a moment as to what election to the Kingdom of God meant. He said plainly that unless men took up their Cross and followed Him they could not be His disciples. He promised them peace—the peace of conscience; He even promised joy—the joy of duty and of complete consecration to truth; but He never promised what the world calls happiness. What He taught, and what the whole story of the world teaches us, is that the greatest attainments of men are constantly conditioned by sacrifice; and therefore the most that Christ could promise His followers was: In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in Me ye shall have peace.

¶ Bear the cross! You must be prepared for a self-denial and sacrifice for others! Is the cross too heavy? Is the burden too great? Then live with the world, live for yourself; let not the woes of others appeal to you—but know this: you will not know either the travail or the true, eternal life. You will not have the glory of joyful fruition. Yours will be a barren life.[1]

2. Jephthah makes his vow and goes forth to battle with the Ammonites. How far did his vow help him in the day of battle? The narrative leads us to suppose that God gave him his triumph on account of his vow. We can, at all events, see that the introspective

[1] *John Brown Paton*, 367.

effects of such a vow must have been great. The man who has put aside all thoughts of worldly advantage, and has consecrated himself to a cause by some sacrificial act, cannot but be spiritually invigorated by his vow. He fights henceforth with the sense that the heavens are with him. He feels himself an instrument in an Almighty hand. He is conscious of the force of destiny that works in and through him. Nowhere is pious faith of such avail as on the battlefield, nor is there any combination so terrible as that of the soldier-saint. It is therefore quite credible that Jephthah really triumphed because of his vow; and in the history of a Cromwell and a Muhammad, and of many other soldiers who have directed great movements in which profound moral issues were involved, we see to what heights of genius, to what prodigies of action, men attain who are elevated and inspired by the sense that they have made a compact with God, so that their cause is henceforth God's cause.

3. And now we reach that part of the story which is truly overwhelming in its pathos and tragic power. Jephthah comes home in triumph—and behold, as he draws nigh, 'His daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.' The poetry of the world holds nothing more profoundly touching than that simple sentence: 'She was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.' You read in it all the solitude and sweetness of the man's life. Expelled from the house of his brethren, dishonoured in his own birth, conscious of the stigma that was on him, this man had found all the joy of his life in this only child. She had been his solace under social indignities, the light of his lonely hearth, the music of his life. Many times he had thanked God, who had denied him so much, that He had given him this exquisite piece of womanhood, this perfect flower of love whose unfolding he had watched with such delighted eyes through so many years. And now, down the vine-clad slopes she comes dancing to meet him, and the strong man trembles, for he sees her dancing to her death. She comes as the bride of triumph; alas! he knows that she is the bride of death; Horror, amazement, self-blame, seize upon him in the same instant. His heart is indeed beaten to the dust, and in the anguish of the moment he cannot see why or wherefore. 'Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low,' he wails. And then the throb of the timbrels dies away; the sun of victory is eclipsed; the spectre of sacrifice stands pale across his path, and for triumph there is given mourning, for laughter tears, for the oil of gladness the bitter cup of grief and the garments of heaviness. Jephthah comes home in triumph, but he comes to find his house made desolate.

(1) It seems probable that Jephthah's vow was a private one. Had its nature been known surely some care would have been exercised to prevent his daughter being the first creature to pass his doorway to meet him on his return. What would have been easier than to have warned the unsuspicious household of its peril? And, even if the vow were private, it would still have been easy for Jephthah himself to have sent such a warning. 'Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house' was after all not a difficult vow to evade. Nay more, without seeking to evade it, he might have kept it in such a way as to have caused little pain or sacrifice. A word from Jephthah, and there might have issued from his doors an ox, garlanded for sacrifice, and this he might have slain as a burnt-offering—and who could say that his vow was not kept? But Jephthah took none of these precautions, because his faith in God was so exquisitely simple and sublime. He left God to exact what sacrifice He would. He had made an unconditional vow, and he would have counted it dishonour and perfidy had he used any human sagacity to mitigate its meaning, or limit its operation.

(2) Nor, again, does Jephthah show the least disposition to withdraw from his vow. He certainly might have done so upon grounds which would have commended themselves even to those who were disposed to criticize him most severely. He might have said: 'A mistake has been made, it is impossible that God should demand this thing; far be it from the Judge of all the earth to act after this manner.' He

might have pleaded that for the honour of God Himself it was necessary to correct what seemed an accident, and an accident that God could neither have sanctioned nor intended. Who of us has not made vows and failed to keep them? And who does not know by what kind of casuistry we can readily persuade ourselves that vows made in some extremity of pain or peril should be very leniently interpreted in the day when the cruel exigency has passed? 'If I recover,' says the sick man, 'I will give half my fortune to God'—and in the hour when the grip of death is on our throat this seems but a light price to pay for deliverance; but we use a very different arithmetic in the days of new-won health. Then we say the vow was Quixotic—no doubt we meant it, but some allowance must be made for the distorted sanity of a mortal sickness; a half—no, no man ever gave thus—a fourth—a tenth—a hundredth part—and at last a little cheque to a charity—that is how we treat our vows! Let it stand to the honour of Jephthah that he made no attempt to withdraw from his vow. 'I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back,' he says, and in all the history of man no sublimer speech was ever uttered.

¶ Mr. Pierson and his three children, Laura, Louise and Delavan, narrowly escaped drowning in Vineyard Lake near their summer home. They had been out fishing in a leaky boat, as they had often done before, but this time the boat became unusually full of water. One child started to change her seat and more water entered over the sides. Suddenly the boat began to sink. The father leaped forward with one child clinging to his back and grasped a slender fishing stake with one hand while with the other he drew two children from under the water. There for half an hour they clung unable to summon assistance from the deserted shore. The father could swim, but was unwilling to leave his children. Between the calls for help to unseen men, they prayed to the unseen God and committed themselves to His keeping. They promised that if their lives were spared they would devote them loyally to His service. Finally a woman heard their calls for help and came to the rescue in another boat. She had never handled oars, and Mr. Pierson, with his head just above water, had to direct her how to use them. Finally they climbed into the boat and reached the shore in safety. The joy and excitement of reunion with loved ones might have effaced from the young minds the covenant made with God and the deeper lesson of gratitude to Him, but the father wrote his children a loving letter which he asked each to sign:

'My dear Laura, Louise, and Delavan:

I cannot keep from thinking about you. . . . I cannot thank God enough for such a wonderful deliverance as that on last Tuesday when we were all saved from drowning.

Now, dear children, do you not think that we ought to remember how we told God, when we were in the water, that if He would save us we would live for His service? We were in the very jaws of death and He put His arms under us and kept us alive. . . . What can we do to show our love to our dear Saviour? I thought I would like to write out my promise to God and sign my name. I think you will each be glad to sign your name also. . . . Let us ask God to make us such a blessing as that we shall see more and more reason to be grateful to Him. . . .

A Promise to God.

We owe our lives to God. He heard our cry and sent us aid when we were in danger of drowning in Vineyard Lake on July 27, 1877. Now we put our names to this promise to give ourselves to Him, praying Him to help us by His Spirit to live all the rest of our days unto Him.'

(Signed) Arthur T. Pierson.
Laura W. Pierson.
Louise B. Pierson.
Delavan Pierson.[1]

4. What was the end of the tragedy? Greek literature holds a very similar tragedy in the story of Iphigenia. Iphigenia was the daughter of Agamemnon; and the legend goes that Agamemnon, having offended Artemis, vowed to sacrifice to the goddess the most beautiful thing born to him within the year. Iphigenia

[1] D. L. Pierson, *Arthur T. Pierson*, 125f.

is born within the year, and the agonized father sees her grow in grace and beauty—knowing that she is dedicated to death! But it is in its close that the story breaks down. The Greek never gazed on death if he could help it. He resolutely turned his eyes away from pain. And so when the hour of martyrdom arrives, behold, Iphigenia vanishes in the clouds, and in her stead a gentle hind stands beside the altar waiting for its executioner.

The Bible is more honest. It does not evade the climax, however dreadful it may be. One hint alone can be found that the ultimate blow did not fall; for the words which Jephthah uses may be rendered, 'Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me shall surely be the Lord's—*or* I will offer it up as a burnt-offering.' But even if this may be taken to mean that his daughter was given to God as a priestess, rather than sacrificed as a victim, we are still in the presence of a great tragedy. She is taken from Jephthah for ever, and doomed to a kind of death in life. He is left to grow old in utter loneliness. The dreams he had cherished of grandchildren gathered round his knees, of a family growing up in power and influence, are all shattered. He has saved his country, but wrecked his home; and the Jew could conceive no worse punishment than to go down to the grave childless, so that his root perished out of the land. But we must remember that the worst may have happened; and that, in an age when human sacrifices were still offered, this Jewish maiden may have perished on the altar. We may say, of course,—and rightly—that such an act is abhorrent, and that God cannot be conceived as desiring such a sacrifice. That may be, but the heroism of Jephthah and his daughter still remains. Jephthah may have been hideously wrong in his theology; he was nevertheless right and noble in his spirit. He did the best he knew; he gave the best he had to God. Let those with a truer enlightenment ask if they, from the standpoint of a purer creed, are prepared to act as nobly as did Jephthah from the standpoint of a narrow and half-barbaric creed.

What shall I do? Make vows and break
them still,
'Twill be but labour lost.
My good cannot prevail against mine ill;
The business will be crossed.

Oh, say not so! thou canst not tell what
strength
Thy God may give thee at the length;
Renew thy vows, and if thou keep the last,
Thy God will pardon all that's past.

Then once again
I vow to mend my ways;
Lord, say Amen,
And Thine be all the praise!

## Jephthah's Daughter.

Judg. xi. 36.—'And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which has proceeded out of thy mouth.'

WOMAN'S life is a synonym for sacrifice. And of this, Jephthah's daughter is *the* Bible type. There are, of course, many others who give evidence of it in their lives: Hannah and Ruth and Esther in the Old Testament, Dorcas and the two Marys in the New. But Jephthah's daughter transcends all these. She is the very incarnation of sacrifice. This indeed is her one title to fame. She had no gifts, like the other great women of the Bible. Her very name is forgotten. By the simple title of 'Jephthah's daughter' will she be known to men. But she had what was better than talents. She gave what was nobler than gifts. She gave herself.

1. If this girl acted with a kind of heroism that is incomparable, it could only be because she had certain deep faiths to sustain her, even as her father had. What were these faiths?

(1) One was that *self has no place in patriotism.* Patriotism means the complete subjugation of self to the public welfare of the land that gave us birth. The first thought of the true patriot is not his own progress in life, but the true progress of his country. The consistent temper of the true patriot is that his country has the right to demand his life, and that to lay down his life for his country

is not so much a sacrifice as an honour and an obligation. The daughter of Jephthah shares to the full this exalted passion. In the silence of that house among the vineyards, when the awe-struck crowd had gone away, the girl laid her head on Jephthah's knees, and he told her all about his vow. And she understood. She saw that her father's word was pledged. She saw that he had bought his country's good at a price terrible to each of them. And she raised her pale face, not in protest, but in sublime submission. A life—one poor human life—what did this count against the peace of Israel? Soldiers had already given as much upon the battlefield; and should she, a soldier's daughter, give less than they? And she said,—and surely it was one of the greatest heroines of history who spoke—'Do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; for as much as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.'

¶ The Chinese cherish a lovely legend concerning the great bell at Pekin. The Emperor, they say, sent for Kuan-Yin, the caster of the bells, and described the bell that he desired. It was to be larger than any bell ever made, and its tone more beautiful. Its music was to be heard a hundred miles away. Great honours were to be heaped upon the bell-maker if he succeeded; a cruel death was to follow his failure. Kuan-Yin set to work; he mixed the costliest metals; he laboured night and day; and at last he finished the bell. He tested it, and was disappointed. He tried again, and was again mortified. He was at his wits' end. Then Ko-ai, his beautiful daughter, consulted an astrologer. The oracle assured her that, if the blood of a fair virgin mingled with the molten metals, the music would ravish the ears of every listener. Ko-ai returned to the foundry; and, when the glowing metal poured white-hot from the furnace, she plunged into the shining bath before her. The music of the great bell, the Easterns say, is the music of her sacrifice.[1]

(2) Jephthah's daughter had learned another thing—that *children must share in the sacrifices of their parents.* This is a truth little taught or even known to-day. That parents should submit to sacrifice for their children is an accepted creed; and often enough children accept these sacrifices with a careless complacency which comes near to unthankfulness and ingratitude. But older and Diviner than the law of parental sacrifice is the law of filial sacrifice and obedience. It is a bad kind of civilization which makes children treat the obligations of home lightly; which makes them eager to escape its trammels; which hardens them into the kind of selfishness that forgets the nest as soon as the wing is strong. It is a misguided love on the part of parents which makes itself so much the drudge and slave of children that children grow up to take all and give little; the old feet ever waiting on the young feet, and the young never imagining that it is nobler to minister than to be ministered unto. Often enough it happens that some sudden tragedy, some misfortune, some bitter change of circumstance, overtakes the parents; but it does not always happen that the children who have gone out into the world are eager to render help, or to acknowledge the obligations of their birth. But this noble-minded girl thought differently. She might have claimed her liberty, but she refused to do so. Her father's honour was her honour, and she would rather die than that the vow made by him should be broken, either in the letter or in the spirit. As we read this story we may see quite clearly—and in the most tragic fashion—how the deeds of parents involve the fate of children, and it is a lesson not to be forgotten; we see also how children, if they be fine-natured, share to the utmost the life of parents, and bear their burdens with and for them.

2. The act of that frail but obedient girl foreshadowed the devotion and sacrifice of Him who, though sinless, yet for our sakes was willing to be accounted a criminal; who, though Divine, yet made Himself man, that He might die and give His life a ransom for many. The only child of Jephthah died amid the exultation of her comrades and the acclaims of her country. Christ the only-be-

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Rubble and Roseleaves*, 168.

gotten Son of God died forsaken by His disciples and amid the execration of foes. The savagery and the sin of the world was to quench itself only in the shed blood of the one Divine Being who once trod earth's surface. But the death of Christ meant the death of sin. His submission to death meant the conquest of hellish hate. He said, 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' He said, 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.' Christ conquered by death. The death of Jephthah's only child came after he had gained his victory: the death of the only-begotten Son was the prelude to an everlasting triumph. 'He must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.' Christ is waiting patiently to reign fully. One day God will be seen to be all in all. One day the mystery of Divine love revealed in Christ will be made completely evident.

A Galilean: art Thou, too, forlorn,
Who wouldst the ruin of the world repair?
Art Thou a failure as Thy foes declare,
Who fain would crown Thee still with barren thorn?
Shall generations evermore be born
To hopes deferred that wither to despair?
Shall sorrowful humanity still wear
The grievous yoke that it has ever worn?

Oh, folly! whatsoe'er of good or great
Rules in this world o'er what is base and vile,
This is His work, which He will consummate
At His good pleasure; therefore, with a smile,
We, who believe in Him, can calmly wait
His triumph, knowing all is right the while.

3. There is a beautifully poetic touch in the narrative, where it is said of Jephthah's daughter that she begged two month's respite that she might bewail her early death '*upon the mountains.*' Fancy paints her as she would steal out from her father's home in the early dawn, and, far up among the lonely hills, nerve her soul for the last dread ordeal by communion with God. 'All great inspiration,' says Ruskin, 'comes from the hills.' 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.' Not among the low valleys, with their vulgar curiosity and intolerable sympathy, but

Up to the hills
Where the torrent fills
With storms of the Winter's brewing,
Close in the clasp
Of Nature's grasp,
There tell thy heart's undoing.

Now there is a striking coincidence between this and our Saviour as He drew near the hour of His great Passion. John tells us that during these last few weeks He withdrew to Bethany beyond Jordan. This is just what was known in Old Testament times as the land of Gilead. Knowing our Lord's love for retirement among the hills for prayer, can we doubt that He would often be up in these solitudes, steeling His soul for the last dread ordeal of the Cross? So we have the striking coincidence that, during the time our Lord was preparing for the Cross, He was treading the same scenes as had once been consecrated by Jephthah's daughter as she prepared her soul for her great sacrifice.

Is it an idle fancy to suppose that He must sometimes have thought of her who bent her will to a foolish father, and that it comforted and strengthened Him as He prepared to yield His to a Father who could not err? Certainly it is at least a striking coincidence that these hills of Gilead should thus have witnessed the preparation hours of the great sacrifice of the Old Testament and the sublime sacrifice of the New.

## Virginity.

Judg. xi. 37.—'And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity.'

It has been understood from Josephus till now that Jephthah's daughter was offered in sacrifice after these two months were ended. But it is not certain that that is the correct interpretation of the passage.

Among Jewish writers, opinion on this sub-

ject may be divided into three chief classes. First, there are those who hold to the belief that Jephthah slew his daughter in accordance with his vow; secondly, there are those who hold that he sacrificed his child out of ignorance of the Mosaic law, and in spite of the fact that this law did not require it; and there is, thirdly, the class of those who maintain that he did not sacrifice her, for the terms of the vow which he made did not imply the sacrifice of a human victim.

Among those who have held the last opinion are some of the greatest commentators, such as Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (or Ralbag), Rabbi David Kimchi (or Redak), and Abravanel. These and many others, including the modern Jewish scholar, Hermann Gollancz, maintain that it is perfectly consistent with the text of the narrative to hold that, as no human sacrifice was intended by the author of the vow, and no human victim was offered, the solution of the whole difficulty may be found in a grammatical point which is easily overlooked.

Says Dr. Gollancz: 'To understand what is stated in the thirty-first verse of the eleventh chapter of Judges as the purport of Jephthah's vow, we must have recourse to the original Hebrew; and we shall find that, besides bearing the interpretation given by the Anglican version, viz., 'It shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering,' the Hebrew words can equally be rendered, 'It shall surely be the Lord's, *or* I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.' The conjunction used, signifies, as is well known, 'or' as well as 'and.'

According to this theory, the vow which Jephthah made was as follows: Would God give him the victory against the Ammonites, then whatever came to meet him first on his return home 'would be the Lord's'—that is, dedicated to God's service, in the event of its being a human object; *or* 'he would offer it up as a burnt-offering' in any other case. As it turned out, it was his daughter who 'came to meet him with timbrels and with dances.' He bethought himself of his vow, but having once opened his mouth, he knew he could not go back. He immediately rent his clothes, and said, 'Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me.' But why was he troubled? Not at the thought of his having to sacrifice her as a burnt-offering, for he had made no such promise; but what 'he did with her, according to his vow which he had vowed,' was to him a sacrifice as dreadful and as complete; it was a living death; it was dying in living, according to the notions of those days.

It was not her death that Jephthah lamented. His great grief on the occasion is explained by the circumstance that his daughter was his heir according to the Law, and so his family would die out—an event most distressing to an Israelite. Moreover, since to live unmarried is, in the East, regarded as a disgrace and a misfortune, his daughter desired to overcome her sorrow in the society of the friends of her youth, that she might the more joyfully and willingly accomplish her father's oath. And so she remained unmarried, perhaps serving her God in the sanctuary; and from this period onward it was customary for the daughters of Israel annually to go and converse, even condole, with Jephthah's daughter four days a year.

¶ In one of the cities where I was pastor there lived a prominent man who had been a Confederate soldier. While on the battlefield in Virginia he was wounded and placed in a Catholic hospital. The Sisters of Charity who nursed him were so kind and attentive that he loved them for their work, and became a convert to their faith. He vowed to himself that he would do all in his power for the Church in after life, vowed this when he was wounded and sick. Entirely restored to health, he became a distinguished and wealthy lawyer, and married the daughter of the governor of his state. By her he had 'one fair daughter and no more, the which he loved passing well.' She grew up to young-ladyhood, the idol of her parents, and admired by a wide and influential circle of friends. When eighteen years of age this beautiful, intelligent and opulent girl decided that she ought to enter the service of the Church which had done so much for her father. Friends tried

to dissuade her, but to no purpose. Her father was appealed to, and remembering his vow he told her to do as she wished if she felt it to be her duty; that he had vowed to withhold nothing from the Church which had done so much for him. This 'rare and radiant maiden' bidding adieu to home, relatives, friends, and lovers, and turning her back on the enchantments of the world, entered a Nunnery, 'took the veil,' and remained a virgin all her life! Was not this the very devotement to which Jephthah's daughter was consigned?[1]

Farewell, you children that I might have borne.
Now must I put you from me year by year,
Now year by year the root of life be torn
Out of this womb to which you were so dear,
Now year by year the milky springs be dried
Within the sealed-up fountains of my breast,
Now year by year be to my arms denied
The burden they would break with and be blessed.

Sometimes I felt your lips and hands so close
I almost could have plucked you from the dark,
But now your very dream more distant grows
As my still aching body grows more stark.
I shall not see you laugh or hear you weep,
Kiss you awake, or cover up your sleep.[2]

## A Nazirite.

**Judg. xiii. 7.—'The child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb to the day of his death' (RV).**

In estimating the career of a man like Samson, we are apt to be influenced by unreasonable scruples. We have no right to judge him by the standards of the Christian conscience, or to make up our minds what use God may make of such a man in His government of the world. But there is much in Samson's history that we must find hard to reconcile with the character of a great and good man, and with the presence and controlling power of the Spirit of God in his life.

[1] M. B. Wharton, *Famous Men of the Old Testament*, 139.
[2] E. Farjeon, *Sonnets and Poems*, 14.

1. Two things stand out in the narrative of Samson's career, as compared with the history of the majority of the other judges.

(1) The other judges fight God's battles with the people at their back. They simply give aid and point to a sense of rising strength, of impatience of subjection, of reviving national pride and religious zeal in the Hebrew people. Samson, on the contrary, stands utterly alone, fights his battle single-handed, is supported by no enthusiasm for the national cause, and not even by common loyalty on the part of his own comrades.

(2) The other judges are chosen for their office as mature men, but Samson is set apart for his career as an unborn child. From his very infancy the sense of his vocation takes possession of him; as child and boy and youth, it is making and moulding him, and preparing him for what he is to be. The explanation of these two characteristic features of his history, which distinguish it from that of the other judges, lies in this, that Samson's lot in life fell upon a period of utter national demoralization.

2. As time goes on, we learn how the method of government by judges broke down in Israel, and was abandoned for government by a king. Its utter inefficiency was manifested by the condition of apathy into which the Israelites had now fallen. They had lapsed into subjection to the despised, uncircumcised Philistines. All national spirit was dying out, and the prestige of Jehovah was giving way before the prestige of Dagon. Jehovah's people were a conquered, tax-paying, Philistine-ridden race. Dagon was triumphant over Jehovah; he was the strong god, Jehovah the weak God.

Now just because God is in human history, such periods seem to produce, as it were, by an inevitable reaction, their own remedies; just as the blighting curse of strong drink is met and fought by the other extreme of total abstinence. So in Samson's time, when the social order, resting on specially selected and temporary judges, had broken down, and religion and patriotism were dwindling and dying out, the popular life produced, by way of recoil, two extraordinary phenomena. The

first was the order of the Nazirites; the second, the order of the prophets. Samson represented the Nazirite, Samuel the prophet. Mark the significance of the Nazirite. The religious conception of Israel in its relation to God was that the whole people were God's body on earth. He dwelt among them, lived in them, wrought through them. But the mass of the people were utterly incapable of realizing such an ideal, and the presence of God in Israel became concentrated in and represented by certain orders of men—the priests, the prophets, the Nazirites. Those three religious orders run all through Hebrew history. The Nazirites were ascetics—the total abstainers, the religious fanatics of the times. They kept their hair uncut as the external mark of their consecration to God. In protest against those habits of luxury and self-indulgence that led by a natural tendency to Baal-worship they abstained from the produce of the grape, and indeed, in many cases, denounced its culture. They occupied precisely the same position that the total abstainer occupies among ourselves. They represented, in the great epochs of Hebrew history, the inevitable and salutary (salvatory) recoil from irreligion and immorality.

For the most part, society moves on without consciousness of the primitive forces. It lives at second hand, on what has been won for it. And while it still has vitality and manhood enough to make it capable of being stirred by some lofty enthusiasm, its awakened spirit can possess a man, and mould and transform him, and shape him to be its leader and exponent. This is the story of the other judges, who were carried forward on such a tide of national enthusiasm. When, however, society has become so emasculated, paralysed, and impotent as to be incapable of a large, general enthusiasm, this happens: God, who is ever caring and working for social progress, drags down into the original depths the new forces and motive-powers that are born in the character of a man—some great religious or social reformer, or some mighty thinker, or some minister—who takes possession in the name of humanity of new forces of physical nature, and gives a new outlet to population, commerce, and industry. This is the explanation of the story of Samson. In this way he was chosen before his birth for his vocation, and shaped to fulfil it. For this reason he had to fight his battles single-handed, unsustained by any popular enthusiasm.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes—they were souls that stood alone,
While the men they agonised for hurled the contumelious stone,
Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam incline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,
By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme design.[1]

[1] Lowell.

# THE TRAINING OF THE CHILD.

Judg. xiii. 12.—'How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?'

## I.

## THE NEED FOR TRAINING.

1. All life, high and low, is susceptible of training within certain limits, and within these limits can be made to take shapes which unassisted nature would never spontaneously assume. And the higher we rise in the scale of life, the more wide is the scope and the possibility of training. The dog or the elephant is capable of far vaster variety of training than the snail, or the worm, or the butterfly. They are of far more complex and lofty organization; have more natural intelligence upon which man can work. It would be strange, therefore, if, when we come up to man, to the human race, in which life presents itself in the highest form in which it is known to us in this

world, in which there is the noblest brain, the largest assemblage of faculties, we found a creature that was incapable of training. So far from this being the case, however, we find in man a creature that is capable of more training, in kind and in extent, than all other creatures with which we are familiar put together. The range of his possible training may be said to be absolutely illimitable.

2. Children are not only capable of training but they will be trained in spite of us. They will be trained—*how* is quite another matter; but they will be trained. And if we do not take them in hand, with a very definite end in view, which we pursue with inflexible purpose and unflagging constancy—an end not lower than heaven, and not narrower than eternity, and not meaner than their salvation—another process will assuredly be going on, which will ere long fill us with dismay. We must know that children are always at school, even when they seem to be away from it. The question is not whether a child's mind shall be full or empty. It will not be empty. You cannot keep it empty. It has living passions, desires, purposes within it that will secure it against perpetual vacancy. They are like the tentacles of some aquatic animals, which are incessantly stretched out to grasp food; and if you do not bring nourishment within their reach, they will stuff their minds with poison. Our children are being taught by everything they see, everything they hear. They are learning from their companions, and teaching them in turn. They are learning at home; learning at the corners of the streets; learning from fathers and mothers, and servants; learning in the playground; learning from books and pictures, from poetry and prose. Every day, whether we think of it or not, they are storing their minds with new words, new thoughts, new conceptions; and every day, too, their minds, which at first are like molten metal that may be poured into any mould and take any shape, are becoming stiffer and harder, and less sensitive to any influence except that to which they are most accustomed.

¶ One of the most potent of all influences in making character is the street. The great majority of children, even in Christian lands, grow up in the street. That is to say, not literally in the street, though thousands do literally, weather permitting. But they are allowed to grow up as they happen to. They simply go and grow as the impulse seizes them, with practically no guiding or restraint. It is surprising to the startling point how many children of Christian homes, or at least church homes, of not-poor homes, as well as of those below that grade, are allowed to drift. There's a simple, striking phrase in Proverbs that is aptly descriptive, 'the child *left to itself*.' That tells the story of the great majority of children in city and country alike.

One can think of no word so expressive to describe the results mentally and morally as the word 'weeds.' They grow; that's in the nature, to grow; but just like a bunch of weeds, vigorous, rank, disordered, and affecting in a bad way both the soil and all after attempts at cultivation.

More children are trained in this weedy, shiftless school than in any other. And it is a real training in its influence, a trainingless untrained training that always gets results. It makes character. The child grows up with no fixed standards. He is undisciplined mentally and morally. The training is a huge process of absorption, with only chance to decide what shall be absorbed. Chance plays its own sweet will with them. Utter lack of training controls their lives from the earliest moment.

And if there do come up out of this street-school some strong characters, it is in spite of the school. It shows the marvellous vitality of the human being. But the handicap suffered affects the whole career. This school is training more children than any other. And its graduates are affecting the whole life of Church and nation immensely. That the results are not worse than they are merely shows what an immense amount of preservative salt has been put into the lump of the human race.[1]

3. Dr. John Kelman tells us that our aim ought to be to make right ideas interesting to the growing mind and wrong ones uninterest-

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 243.

ing. 'But this,' he says, 'cannot be done without taking these natural lines of interest into consideration. The interest of children must be directed from within, by one, as it were, standing among their natural interests, leading some of them forward into clearer vividness, and others back into indistinctness. A well-known preacher is reported to have said in a sermon to parents: "Tell your children that if they want to go to heaven they must be natural." The saying is relevant here and memorable. Besides imparting new ideas to children, our still more urgent task is to render interesting what is heavenly of thought and character within them. The secret of education has been learned when a child regards the best ideas, not as good things imposed upon him from without, but as the natural favourites of his life within.'[1]

(1) First of all, then, we have to deal with bad things which are naturally interesting. One of the most vivid natural phenomena of mind is the morbid fascination which anything horrible, repulsive, or gruesome has for children. Fear is said to be the earliest of all the passions to show itself, a fact whose explanation probably lies far back in heredity. The fascination is powerful and terrible accordingly. Looking back into our childhood, most of us picture, with a distinctness that would be priceless if its light fell on sweet memories, this and that thing that terrified us. A dream of some dear one being killed, the furious roar of the nursery chimney when it was on fire, a bad face looking through a window—some such instances will suggest themselves to all.

Much use was formerly made of this source of interest in religious teaching, and teachers will always find it easy to interest children so. It is a temptation, perhaps, to take a quick way of enforcing truth. It seems reasonable to say that if you tell children some horrible thing about sin or some tragic story about the death or punishment of sinners, it will frighten them from the sin. As a matter of fact, it will not do so any more than public executions deterred criminals from crime. The horrible image will be much more vivid than the thought of the sin, and it will live on in the memory quite apart from the moral it was meant to teach. We have all known children who lay in bed for many a dreadful hour haunted by some picture of a devil they had seen, perhaps in an old-fashioned religious book; but which of us can point to any child who was kept from any sin by such means? Frightful thoughts and images can do no good of any kind to children. Their power is a survival of hereditary evils and not a legitimate means of education, and our duty with regard to them is to keep them out of children's way.

(2) But there are good things whose interest is naturally as great. The drawback is that it takes some trouble to get at the beautiful ideas of a child's mind, and to impart to it beautiful ideas so as to make them interesting, while the vulgar and horrible and bad is gaudy and catches the eye easily. Even Dante has succeeded in getting many more readers for his *Inferno* than for his *Paradiso*. But to take this fact for guide is, to say the least, a lazy man's way of interesting children. A little thought and study will reveal ways of making the fair side of life attractive. Find out the particular heroic side of life which the child is born to admire, be at pains to catch exactly some aspect of it, and describe it; and the ideal self will break through all the flesh-bonds and leap upwards to it in enthusiastic interest. That is how to raise children above the earth. When they see some ideal of their own lifted up from the earth, they will be drawn after it. They rebel against the evil that is in them and long after the good. And if the whole of any teacher's work results only in giving one living idea to a child—in calling out the ideal self of him—that work is a thousand times repaid. If he can succeed in making courage, or self-sacrifice, or honour, or gentleness, or, better still, the Son of God, in whom the fullness of all these dwells, permanently interesting to a child, he has not failed in his life-work. 'A man,' says Richter, 'may be governed through his whole life by one divine image of his childhood.'

It may be true that on the whole more

[1] In *The Expository Times*, ix. 297.

children are now ruined for life by over-indulgence than are marred by excessive severity. Yet let us keep cool heads in comparing both sides of the account, in the effort to see where the real truth lies. The egoistic parents of a former day were invariably delighted when their children resembled them; and from this most amusing and naïve of all human weaknesses modern fathers and mothers are by no means wholly free. Then there was accepted, to an absurd extent, the theory that children were naturally limbs of iniquity, and must be literally 'licked' into grace with a more than bear-like benevolence. There was a vast amount of stupid misunderstanding and tyranny showed towards children. They were crushed, mocked, and coerced. There were heavy thrashings for small offences, and the small people were subjected to such purposeless cruelties as being made to sit still for hours and being compelled to read good books they could not understand, until they learned to hate the very idea of restraint. No one desires to go back to this state of things; but there is a real danger of moving, not deliberately, but by more unreasoning sentimental drift, towards the opposite extreme. Now that the question is raised, all that mothers and fathers can do in every household where boys and girls are growing up is to think seriously over the matter, and to revise their methods if their observation or instinct tells them that slack, or selfish, or feeble, or vicious tendencies are beginning to show in their children. However busy parents may be,—and the increasing want of time to think is a great danger in this connection—they absolutely must take time to ponder this matter.

¶ Discipline is not the law unless mated with freedom; freedom has no power unless regulated by obedience. Both ideals lie together essentially regnant in the law fundamental. Knox and Tolstoy may both justly claim success, but with both of them other elements than the trusted systems have taken hand in the schools' welfare. Tolstoy's personal influence was such that, in spite of the entire absence of discipline, some grand results were won; while in Scotland, in spite of the cruel punishments, other influences, such as native wit and national integrity, strengthened doubtless by the fine discipline, have prospered. As a matter of fact, Tolstoy himself found his system unworkable in the education of his own children, as soon as it was relegated to others; and both punishments and discipline were allowed some authority, though still only as the supporters of much liberty.[1]

¶ My father was absolutely just, to the point of stern severity, the uttermost farthing. That was the Law. My mother supplied the Gospel. A proverb frequently on her lips was this: 'The liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand.'[2]

4. The great practical question, however, is the exercise of discipline. What restraint should be imposed, and what liberty granted? It must always be to a large extent a matter of adaptation. One child needs restraint; another develops best in freedom. Modern Psychology recognizes the great difference between what are called the *motor* and the *sensory* types of child. Of course, there are many intervening, overlapping types; there is not here, any more than anywhere else, a clear-cut dividing line. But we are all familiar with the lively, instantly acting, generous boy, and with his more balancing and meditative, and therefore less manifestly responsive, brother. Peter and John and Thomas were children before they were Apostles; and those are children to-day who will be Peter and John and Thomas a quarter of a century hence. Discipline is equally important for each class; its results will take the shape of self-control in one, of faith in another, of bravery in a third; in each case supplying what is lacking and rounding off character. The wise ruling power will adjust the application of authority and the guidance according to the nature of the subject.

Most mistakes in training are due to the assumption that all children are to be dealt with in the mass and by the same rules. Remember how differently the Saviour treated the three disciples whose names we have

[1] G. Macdonald, *The Child's Inheritance*, 10.
[2] G. F. Browne, *The Recollections of a Bishop*, 14.

mentioned. It would have broken John's heart had it been he to whom Jesus said, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' Shrewd old Charles Garrett used pithily to say in one of his sermons, 'There is this lad; if you take the rod to him you will break his heart. And there is that one; if you don't, he will break yours.' Parents must be ready to face the appearance of injustice because they vary their discipline according to its object; teachers must be willing to take still greater risks, since their pupils have so much greater variety. The discipline which to the motor child would take the form of rebuke or diversion would for the sensory be stimulus and incentive.

5. It is frequently said that parents are at present inclined to spoil their children. Partly, we are told, in a reaction against what we have taught ourselves to think was the overstrictness and severity of a past age,—forgetting what a fine and stalwart race of Englishmen it bred—partly in a merely selfish desire to see our children 'having a good time,' we omit from our scheme of education, and from our daily practice, that discipline of ourselves and our children which would mould their character by fighting our own and their inclinations when those inclinations were not in the right direction.

The charge was made with most plausibility before the War. In an article in the *Nineteenth Century* the Earl of Meath deplored what he described as the lack of grit in the present and rising generation, defining 'grit' as that 'virile spirit which makes light of pain and physical discomfort, and rejoices in the consciousness of victory over adverse circumstances, and which regards the performance of duty, however difficult and distasteful, as one of the supreme virtues of all true men and women;' and he gave many instances of the way duty and difficulty were shirked, and 'I ought to do it' made to wait upon 'I don't wish to do it.' But the War showed that the rising generation, whatever else it lacked, did not lack 'grit.'

¶ Says Mrs. Arthur Phillp (Organizing Secretary of the Ministering Children's League): 'I first began *consciously* to realise the value of hardness, or, may I put it negatively and say the "evil of softness," in education when I heard a wise old lady, herself a grandmother, who was gifted with a rhetorical style of speaking which, had she been a man, would have made her famous in the pulpit or at the bar, startle a room full of mothers, to whom she was speaking of their duties, by saying, "Don't be *fond* of your children!" and, after an effective pause, go on to explain that fondness and foolishness were etymologically identical, that the mother who was "fond" of her children spoiled them by foolish indulgence, thought of their present enjoyment and not of their future happiness, and in her selfish delight in giving them pleasure and sparing them trouble, too often laid the foundation of undisciplined, unsatisfactory lives; while the mother who truly "loved" her children had strength to deny them *and herself* pleasures, and helps, and enjoyments which she knew must sow the seeds of future self-indulgence and form habits which were fatal to future strength of character.'[1]

6. But in spite of the generous enthusiasm and the heroic endurance shown by our young men in the War the warning of Bushnell may be more necessary now than ever: 'We have many who have taken up notions of liberty, or free moral agency, in their power and privilege in regard to their children. Assuming the unquestionable first truth that religious virtue or piety is a matter strictly personal the freewill offering of obedience and duty to God, they subside into the impression that they are, of course, absolved from any close responsibility for that which lies so entirely in the choices of their children themselves. They may not take their absolution by any formal inference, and may not even be aware that they have taken it at all; but the distinction between manhood and childhood is so far hidden or slurred over under their supposed principle of responsibility grounded in free agency that their self-indulgence is accommodated by the pretext more easily than they know. Sometimes the inference will be half uttered in their feeling, as when they ask, only not aloud—'After all, must not our children answer for themselves?' So they

[1] In *Essays on Duty and Discipline*, i. 67.

submit resignedly to the supposed necessity, and do it with so much less of compunction because they consciously have so tender a feeling for their children, and are so much pained by the sense of their religious perils. But the submission they fall into in this pious way amounts, in fact, to a real absolution not seldom, from all the finest, tenderest, most faithful, most unworldly cares of their parental office. They subside thus into a habit of remissness and religious negligence, and their way of nurture becomes unparental, even as that of the ostriches.'[1]

The warning is backed by a reason which is very characteristic: 'Their blame in such defections from duty is greater than they know. For God has probably instituted the reproductive order of existence, including the parental and filial relation, with a special design to mitigate the perils of free agency. One generation is to be ripe in knowledge and character, and the next is to be put in charge of the former, in the tenderest, most flexible, most dependent state possible, to be by them inducted into the choices where their safety lies. . . . Their responsibility in the parental office is not diminished, but increased even a hundredfold, by the personal liberty and strict individuality of their children. It would be far less cruel to be negligent of their bodily wants; for the body will maintain its growth, and will even manage to increase in robustness, when it is poorly clad and fed upon the coarsest fare. But the mind, or soul, born to greater perils than want or the weather,—even the tremendous perils of untaught liberty, and principles unfixed—waits, at the point of its magnificent infancy, to be led into the choices, tastes, affinities and habits that are to be the character of its eternity. Tenderness everywhere else, and remissness here, is only the mockery of kindness. Let the first want be first, and the highest nature have the promptest care; and if anything is left to the nurture of the sands (as with the ostrich), let it be the body, where the crime of the desertion will be less and will certainly not be hid.'[2]

¶ This wild college life was certainly a very different type from the sneak-as-you-please but never-wet-your-feet existence of the private school, and it was the better of the two, for freedom is better than slavery; but, alas! for the waste and ruin in the future, the wretchedness, and coarseness, and idleness at the time which it brought on the majority of those cast into its whirl. It was not training, for training does not mean some boys turning out well in spite of disadvantages, a bit more than farming means the growth of grass and corn in spite of not draining and bad ploughing.[1]

[1] H. Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 43.
[2] *Ibid.*, 44.

## II.

## THE ART OF TRAINING.

There are some hints which may be given to parent or teacher.

1. It is better to encourage the good in children than to discourage the bad. 'If I have the least faculty for anything in this world, it is for teaching children, and making them good and *perfectly happy* going along. My whole principle is that no government is of the least use except self-government, and the worst children will do right, if told which is right and wrong, and that they must act for themselves. Then I have a fashion, told me by a friend when Francesca was a baby; which is this—*never see evil, but praise good;* for instance, if children are untidy, do not find fault, or appear to notice it, but the first time possible, praise them for being neat and fresh, and they will soon become so. I dare say you can account for this, I cannot; but I have tried it many times, and have never known it fail. I have other ideas, but you might not approve of them—the religious instruction I limited to paying my little friends for learning Dr. Watts' "Though I'm now in younger days," but I suppose *that*, like my system generally, is hopelessly old-fashioned. Very young children can learn this verse from it:—

> I'll not willingly offend,
> Nor be easily offended;
> What's amiss I'll strive to mend,
> And endure what can't be mended.'

There was an old American sea captain who said he had been many times round the world comfortably by the help of this verse.'[2]

[1] G. R. Parkin, *Life and Letters of Edward Thring*, i. 23.
[2] Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, viii. Letter 35.

¶ The Booth children were left in no mist of doubt as to their future. There was an end, a point, a purpose, in their life. They grew up in an atmosphere of decision. Many children are made timid, diffident, ineffective by their training. They are constantly told how naughty they are, till they begin to believe that they are good for nothing. The Booth parents acted on a different principle. They had faith in their children and for their children. When Katie was still a little girl in socks, her mother would say to her, 'Now, Katie, you are not here in this world for yourself. You have been sent for others. *The world is waiting for you.*' What a phrase that was to send a little girl to bed with! There she turned the words over and over in her own mind.[1]

2. It is wise to encourage individuality but without allowing it to develop into eccentricity. The fight for a distinct individuality is the mainspring of many childish aberrations which are frequently clumped together under the head of faults. Yet it were good if each child of Adam, male or female, were able to approach maturity in the confidence of an individual personality, not to be puffed up by another's praise, not to be cast down by another's blame, but able to test all actions serenely by the purpose which prompted them, and by the manner in which they were carried out, courageous in the knowledge that his life is his own, vowed to good service, and strong in the conviction that the sternest judge of any wrong-doing, slackness, or insincerity of conduct holds court within his breast, yet not to be turned aside by failure, or despondent because the high level of virtue has not always been attained.

3. A distinction must be made between the child and the man. Says a recent writer: 'The children in New York seem particularly bright and friendly, but are without the pretty shyness which many of us find rather attractive in the younger generation of the Old World. They live as their parents' constant companions, and soon adopt their manner of speaking and thinking. Therefore it was not surprising, though perhaps rather pathetic, to find that the prices of things loomed largely in their young imaginations.

One instance was told us by an American lady, who had been two years in Europe and on her return went to see some wealthy friends whose little boy had been seriously unwell. Being taken to the child's room, she told him how concerned she had been to hear of his illness. "Why, yes, I was terribly sick, and had two doctors. It cost a lot too, I can tell you," answered the boy with portentous solemnity and satisfaction.

A dear little child of six years old sat at the table near us at one hotel in the States, and had meals with his parents, beginning breakfast every day with iced water and grapefruit, and taking a varied late dinner at half-past seven. He sat up afterwards till ten o'clock listening to the orchestra, and frequently gave us the benefit of his experience of men and things, and proffered advice. He was very charming, in spite of being old before his time, keeping us amused with his baby wit and wisdom. It was rather disconcerting to find that his father was a medical man who suffered from severe indigestion himself, although the boy was allowed to feast on sweets and savouries as though dyspepsia was but a phantom of the imagination.'[1]

4. Avoid as far as possible four bad habits.

(1) *Scolding.*—Diversion is much preferable to rebuke. In fact, the word 'Don't' to the motor child often suggests the very wrong-doing which it is desired to avoid. The boy of quick and active nature is like a horse that has no blinkers; he catches sight of everything on both sides of the horizon as well as of things straight ahead along the road. To bid such a one not to do something is to draw his attention to it, perhaps for the first time. Just as a few years previously he practised his baby teeth on everything he could reach, lawful or unlawful, so now he is apt to practise his growing will on all subjects that come before his gaze. Guidance is better than inhibition. If we wish to inhibit, it is well to realize that the

[1] J. Strahan, *The Maréchale*, 10.

[1] *Memorials of Henry Forbes Julian*, 130.

noblest expulsive power is a new affection. The mother and nurse, with that intuitive comprehension of childhood which the Creator has implanted in woman, seem naturally to be able to bring the new affection into play in order to avoid the undesirable. Those who deal with days beyond the nursery may well learn the lesson.

¶ Not being liable to be shaken by sudden gusts of temper I could not understand my poor little sister's outbursts, and I used to witness them in petrified amazement. They were certainly odd exhibitions. She would fling herself down on the ground in paroxysms of passion, rolling over and over again, perhaps down a grassy terrace or into a flower-bed. On one occasion when she was six years old she had indulged in one of these fits of wrath, and my father gravely invited her to come for a walk alone with him. Her guilty little conscience made her dread reproofs, so she locked herself into an empty room, from which, after what seemed to us an interminable time, she was extricated by the aid of the village carpenter. In spite of her desperate attempts to avoid it, the walk took place. To her relief my father did not allude to her naughtiness, but entertained her with a most interesting talk about the flowers and birds and objects which they saw on their walk. Her gratitude for his forbearance laid the foundation of the devoted admiration with which she always afterwards regarded him.[1]

(2) *Snubbing.*—That most popular form of torture among parents who pride themselves upon their own cleverness and wit, is a dangerous and harmful mode of administering correction. Children lose confidence when their elders, taking advantage of childish ignorance, tease them for the amusement of onlookers, and it is only good for all youthful boys and girls to be well 'ragged' by their equals and contemporaries; they have power, in such a case, to retaliate, and in retaliation exert their own abilities, learning to 'look alive' and take their chance among many. But if children are supposed to exhibit good manners, they learn not to 'answer back' when reprimanded, and as strict justice is to prevail in all dealing, it is therefore of the highest importance that no unfair advantage should be taken of a child's enforced silence. Teasing, bullying, snubbing, all come from the same idea, and should be unheard of in the relationship of parent towards child.

(3) *Nagging.*—'It happens to me sometimes,' says the Hon. Edward Lyttelton, Headmaster of Eton College,[1] 'it happens to me sometimes to be talking with a parent who has come down to the school to look after an unsatisfactory son. In all that she says of him I can see how anxious and thoughtful and truly good she is, and I wonder to myself what can be the reason that her control over him is so slight. Perhaps at this juncture he comes into the room, and in a moment the mystery is solved. Almost before she has greeted him she charges him with having inked his collar or smashed his hat, or she assumes he will be late for breakfast next morning. In short, to use the expressive monosyllable, she "nags" him. And if she does so till the poor lad begins to blush and look sheepish in the presence of a stranger, what must have been going on during all the years of childhood at home?'

However irritating they may be, to 'nag' about trifles is very foolish, because you want your powder and shot for other things. As to the general problem, the only recommendation that can be made is, first to settle what you mean to stop; make it then a matter of obedience, and come down upon the violation of your order sharply and promptly. The worst 'naggers' are those who make offences out of things perfectly innocent to the child, simply because they exasperate the elders. No rebuke should be administered (unless the thoughtlessness is positively culpable) except when there has been disobedience. But 'nagging' is worse than foolish. It is the indication of a failure of love, and if the mother's love ever fails, whence is the boy to learn the idea of the love of God?

(4) *Coddling.*—In *Fors Clavigera* (as well as in *Preterita*) Ruskin frankly deplores the effects of his parents' ceaseless vigilance: 'My judgment of right and wrong, and powers of independent action, were left entirely un-

[1] *Memoir of Sophia de Franqueville*, 10.

[1] E. Lyttelton, *Mothers and Sons*, 12, 15.

developed; because the bridle and blinkers were never taken off me. Children should have their times of being off duty, like soldiers; and when once the obedience, if required, is certain, the little creature should be very early put for periods of practice in complete command of itself; set on the barebacked horse of its own will, and left to break it by its own strength. But the ceaseless authority exercised over my youth left me, when cast out at last into the world, unable for some time to do more than drift with its elements. My present courses of life are indeed not altogether of that compliant nature, but are, perhaps, more unaccommodating than they need be, in the insolence of reaction; and the result upon me, of the elements and the courses together, is, in sum, that at my present age of fifty-six, while I have indeed the sincerest admiration for the characters of Phocion, Cincinnatus, and Caractacus, and am minded so far as I may, to follow the example of those worthy personages, my own private little fancy, in which, for never having indulged me, I am always quarrelling with my Fortune, is still as it always was, to find Prince Ahmed's arrow, and marry the Fairy Paribanou. My present verdict, therefore, on the general tenor of my education at that time, must be, that it was at once too formal and too luxurious; leaving my character, at the most important moment for its construction, cramped indeed, but not disciplined; and only by protection innocent, instead of by practice virtuous. My mother saw this herself, and but too clearly, in later years; and whenever I did anything wrong, stupid, or hard-hearted—(and I have done many things that were all three)—always said, 'It is because you were too much indulged.'[1]

5. Bear in mind that control is for self-control, and control is overdone if it destroys confidence.

(1) Control is for self-control. The child shares with the lower and the higher creation a real taste for being controlled. The high-bred horse, sensitive in every nerve, is yet at his best and fleetest when under control of the master whom he loves. There must be in horse or child alike a sense of strength, justice, constancy in the ruler. Given these, there are the confidence and steadiness which mark the settled order. Involved in this, to the reasoning human being there comes home the value of self-control, the self-subjugation of will which fortifies itself by reason. It is true that the young child must learn to obey simply because authority is lawful, and that reasons for commands will often be withheld; but the real ground for this is that reason has learnt the trust-worthiness and wisdom of the giver of the commands. Later on, as the imperfect creature draws nearer to perfection, reason will add its details. In the first stage it is most important that there should be cultivated the deliberate subordination of self-will, the deliberate acceptance of a higher and trusted intelligence. He who is in command must first learn to obey; and the first stage of fitness to rule is the recognition of the place of righteous subordination in the scheme of life.

¶ The secret of success is the engaging of the will on the side of restraint. We forget that the *desire* to act in a certain way must be roused before there can be any willing effort, and that we often compel children to do not only what is distasteful to them, but what does not appeal to them as worth doing. Children will discipline themselves if they see a meaning and use in self-denial. A whole class of lively children, who were fortunate enough to have a considerate teacher whom they loved, tried of their own accord to be very quiet in playtime because the window of someone who happened to be ill looked into their playground. How often we see instances of children trying not to cry when they are hurt because they want to be brave, or struggling to keep perfectly still while they watch someone doing a delicate piece of work, or stopping some employment in which they are interested to help a younger child. If we will only help and encourage children to put forth effort along lines which they are already inclined to follow, we shall find that habits are being formed which will prove to be the foundation of further acts of self-discipline.[1]

[1] J. Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, v., Letter 54.

[1] M. A. Wroe, *Thoughts on the Training of Children*, 22.

(2) Control is either excessive or undecided and in either case unwise, if it hinders genuine confidence between parent and child. 'In all rightly ordered households, the confidence between the parent and child is such that in the event of a parent's wish becoming contrary to a child's feeling of its general duty, there would be no fear or discomfort on the child's part in expressing its thoughts. The moment these are necessarily repressed, there is wrong somewhere.' [1]

¶ Mr. Morritt's mention of the 'happy young family clustered round him' at Mr. Laidlaw's *kirn*, reminds me that I ought to say a few words on Scott's method of treating his children in their early days. He had now two boys and two girls; and he never had more. He was not one of those who take much delight in a mere infant; but no father ever devoted more time and tender care to his offspring than he did to each of his, as they successively reached the age when they could listen to him, and understand his talk. Like their mute playmates, Camp and the greyhounds, they had at all times free access to his study; he never considered their tattle as any disturbance; they went and came as pleased their fancy; he was always ready to answer their questions, and when they, unconscious how he was engaged, entreated him to lay down his pen and tell them a story, he would take them on his knee, repeat a ballad or a legend, kiss them, and set them down again to their marbles or ninepins, and resume his labour as if refreshed by the interruption. From a very early age he made them dine at table, and 'to sit up to supper' was the great reward when they had been 'very good bairns.' In short, he considered it as the highest duty as well as the sweetest pleasure of a parent to be the companion of his children; he partook all their little joys and sorrows, and made his kind unformal instructions to blend so easily and playfully with the current of their own sayings and doings, that so far from regarding him with any distant awe, it was never thought that any sport or diversion could go on in the right way, unless *papa* were of the party, or that the rainiest day could be dull so he were at home.[1]

¶ In later years, some of the Hawarden guests were half startled and shocked by the freedom of criticism that reigned in the family circle. The balance was redressed when outside the home—to the world we have always shown a united and impregnable front! But at home we discussed things almost on terms of equality.

It bored him to hear people apologetically differ: 'My dearest love, I really think you are wrong.' Partly in fun, he thought it more to the point to be short and sharp: 'A lie!' It is impossible to forget Lord Morley's face when he first heard one of us say to Mr. Gladstone: 'A lie!' And it always succeeded. It was an unfailing amusement and put every one in good humour. . . .

Yet though love, on the part of their children, cast out fear, the attitude of their minds towards their parents was of a very different nature from that of the present generation.

The relations between one generation and another had not become nearly so strained as in these present days. There was more identity in the point of view; the spirit of investigation was more generally dormant; things were more taken for granted; traditions accepted; other people's homes were not necessarily superior to our own. 'Honour your father and your mother,' was accepted in the spirit and the letter. School and University experiences did not necessarily bring severance, or even estrangement, between mothers and sons. The deeply interesting study of the relations between one generation and another, in the present day so much discussed in novels of note, would scarcely have fitted in those days. There was too much *esprit de corps*. The tone, the standard, set by the parents was followed almost unquestioningly by their children. Their aims were the same, they saw the same vision.[2]

¶ Be always frank and open with your children. Make them trust you and tell you all their secrets. Make them feel at ease with

[1] J. Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, vi., Letter 63.

[1] J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, iii. 106.

[2] Mary Drew, *Catherine Gladstone*, 263.

you, and make *free* with them. There is no such good plaything for grown-up children like you and me, as *weans*, wee ones. It is wonderful what you can get them to do with a little coaxing and fun. You all know this as well as I do, and you all practise it every day in your own families. Here is a pleasant little story out of an old book. 'A gentleman having led a company of children beyond their usual journey, they began to get weary, and all cried to him to carry them on his back, but because of their multitude he could not do this. "But," says he, "I'll get horses for us all," then, cutting little wands out of the hedge as ponies for them, and a great stake as a charger for himself, this put mettle in their little legs, and they rode cheerily home." '[1]

## God's Fairness.

**Judg. xiii. 22, 23.—'And Manoah said unto his w'fe, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands.'**

In these words the mother of Samson said a greater thing than she knew. She said something so deep and final that nothing further will ever be able to be said along that particular line. For one moment this woman saw into the very nature of things; and though the clouds next moment may have blotted out her star, it was a star indeed, an everlasting truth of God, that she had seen. It was the very star which had been leading and was still to lead and is to lead for ever the soul of man in his ever-deepening apprehension of God.

1. We cannot survey the teeming treasures of earth and sky without feeling that God means to deal generously with us. Ruskin declared that there was beauty enough in a lily to decorate a cathedral; and our Lord found truth and grace enough in a lily to furnish a creed for that cathedral—a creed of absolute trust in our Heavenly Father. Every sunbeam, every shower, every sheaf rebukes our scepticism and despair. If the design of God were sinister, if He were pleased to forsake us, to abandon us to hunger and nakedness, to torment and destroy us, would He have thus filled our world with riches and splendour? In Revelation we have exceeding great promises in black and white, whilst in Nature are millions more of promises in gold and purple; and God means to keep them all. In our personal history, too, how wondrously has He blessed us! When we are tempted to dark fears, let us think of what God is likely to do by the gracious things He has already shown us in Nature and in life. Every gift and deliverance of the past is also a prophecy and promise. In granting us these things He contracts engagements to us; His past favours lay Him under the necessity of conferring other favours; He must be consistent with Himself, and finish what He has begun. He must honour His own government.

¶ At times Dr. Whyte found in his author some phrase or idea which led out and up to one of his great flights into the purely spiritual region. Thus, when expounding Epictetus, he paused on the phrase, *Nomina debita*, 'Names are debts.' First he indicated how the Stoic teacher had applied the principle to the characters and lives of his own hearers, and then he linked it with his favourite text regarding the Name of the Lord (Ex. xxxiv.), and the Class listened breathlessly as he pressed home the message that the Almighty Himself has come under obligation to do and to be to us all that is implied in the great words, 'Merciful, Gracious, Longsuffering, Abundant in Goodness and Truth.'[1]

2. If the Lord were pleased to kill us, would He have showed us all these things? God has not only shown us many wonderful things; He has also spoken many wonderful words. The great silence of eternity has been broken, and we have listened to mighty messages of love and hope. Seers have risen in all nations and ages, teaching doctrines which stretch far beyond this life and its interests. In Egypt, Assyria, Persia, India, China, Greece, and Rome poets and philosophers

[1] J. Brown, *Locke and Sydenham*, Appendix, 48.

[1] G. F. Barbour, *Alexander Whyte*, 332.

taught truths which transcend the trivial and mortal, and assume a vaster world and destiny than the present. In Judæa patriarchs, lawgivers, psalmists, and prophets enforced high and holy doctrines which are foolishness if this life is all. Last of all in this circle God spoke to us by His Son, spoke words pulsating with eternity. And in each generation since then great teachers have appeared protesting against animalism and materialism; warning their contemporaries that they are men, not beasts, and eloquently conjuring them to live for higher ends than those of terrestrial advantage and indulgence. Our own age has been illuminated by men who have appealed to our spirituality and aroused us from sordid life to grasp the prizes of a higher world. We may not always be able to distinguish very clearly between a sky-sign and a star, between the fancies of men thrust into the heavens and the authorized messages of eternity; but, whatever falsities and errors may cloud and confuse our vision, God has never permitted us to lose sight of immortal ideas, beliefs, and hopes—the truths of eternity have been kept before us high, clear, solemn, like the Milky Way in the midnight heaven.

3. Does Nature implant instincts it does not mean to gratify? Does God excite hopes in us that He does not intend to fulfil? 'He satisfieth the desire of every living thing.' Will He then mock the sublimest desire of all —the instinct of immortality? No; He does not mean to destroy us. The grandeur of the world, of which we are the chief aim; the splendour of our faculties; the costliness of our education; the munificence of our treatment—these, one and all, are prophecies and pledges of great things prepared for faithful souls. We shall not die like dogs; the grass of the churchyard shall not cover our great being and hope.

When grim Death doth take me by the throat
Thou wilt have pity on Thy handiwork.

A great truth like immortality must indeed have its corroborations all through Nature and in the human soul for those who have eyes to see. It will always help many of us, especially in those hours that come when we wish to have our faith profoundly based, if we make it clear to ourselves that our future depends, when all is said, upon nothing else than the eternal justice of God.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust;
Thou madest man, he knows not why:
He thinks he was not made to die,
And Thou hast made him: Thou art just.

Manoah said, 'We shall surely die, because we have seen God.' But his wife said unto him, 'If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have shewed us all these things.' A cosmos, says Lotze, cannot have chaos for its crown.

¶ Not long after she [a member of Mr. Murker's congregation] was laid upon her death-bed. On the first visit her minister paid to her after all hope of recovery was abandoned, he asked what she thought of God's dealings with her. 'What do I think of them?' she exclaimed, as she looked up in his face with a little of the old lively forcible expression, 'They're just wonderfu'; rinnin' ower wi' love an' mercy.' Then she added after a pause, 'Oh aye haud up Jesus Christ tae a puir perishin' sinnin' worl': mak' Him the heid an' the hert o' a' your preachin'. What would I be noo without Him, an auld dune deein' woman, gaun doun tae the cauld grave an' outer darkness, jist like a withered leaf drappin' doun wi' the wintry blast on a lanesome nicht.' Then her countenance, changing from the troubled expression which reflected this dark picture, was lighted up—wan and sickly as it was—with an almost heavenly brightness, as she continued, 'But wi' Christ I'm jist like the laverock that kens the mornin' has come, an' is gaun tae rise frae its nest on the earth to mount the lift, an' wi' its wee bit cheery sang meet the rising sun.'

'Does the fear never cross your mind that all your faith is a dream?' he asked another time. With a displeased and pained look, which made him bitterly repent his indiscretion, she said slowly, as if every word came

from the depth of her soul, 'If this—is—a—dream—whaur's—the—reality?' Then, as if speaking to herself, she said in a whisper, 'He winna forsak' me, He cam' tae me when I didna seek Him, an' noo when I need Him, and seek Him wi' a' my soul—Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' [1]

4. If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have revealed His grace as He has done. The fear of Manoah arose out of the sense of sin; but, in so many words, his wife replies, 'True we are sinners, yet God has accepted our sacrifice, and shown us tokens for good, and He would not have done this had He meant to destroy us.' Does not this argument hold with us? A great sacrifice comes between us and God—the accepted Sacrifice of Calvary; and does not this avail on our behalf? 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.' By virtue of this offering God has assured us of forgiveness, vouchsafed the sense of His favour, kindled in our heart love, peace, and hope; and is it likely that He will abandon us? In our Christian experience we find the prophecy and promise of fullness of life. 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.' 'Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit.'

My soul said unto me: Yea, God is wise
With wisdom far too bright for our weak eyes.
I answered thus my soul: Yea, God is wise!

My soul said unto me: Yea, God is good
And maketh love to be our daily food.
I answered thus my soul: Yea, God is good!

I sent my soul from me that it might tell
The damned and make a Heaven where was Hell,
It smiled and said: Nay, fear not, all is well![2]

[1] J. Stark, *John Murker of Banff*, 187f.
[2] F. Manning, *Eidola*, 41.

## The Spirit and the Man.

**Judg. xiii. 25.—'The spirit of the Lord began to move him in Mahaneh-dan.'**

All through the world's history you find that when a people's life has fallen into the mire and becomes impotent its recovery begins in the sudden meridian of a great personality. There was providence in the rise of Samson. God watches over life, over all life, over the life of States, over the life of men. It is impossible to doubt that there are predispositions in nations intended to play a great part in Divine purposes, and it is equally impossible to doubt that there is a Divine predisposition in the rise of great and heroic men. Such is the teaching of Divine truth; such, especially, is the teaching of the Book of Judges.

1. How, humanly speaking, was Samson prepared for his work?

(1) To begin with, God made a cradle and a home for him. Samson's mother was a woman with a great soul and a large heart, a woman to whom God was a reality; a woman who could not indeed fight God's battles and deliver God's people, but whose spirit dwelt in the unseen, and who was possessed with a tremendous longing that there should be deliverance for Israel, that something heroic should appear in history, and that God should vindicate His might and grandeur above the heathen gods. Samson was born to a mother who longed for a boy, not that he might rise to comfort and ease, but that he might be noble and heroic, and fight and, if need be, die for God and God's Kingdom. To her son she transmits her hope, faith, and enthusiasm. Can you measure the might of a motherhood like that? Such a mother can make men saints and heroes.

¶ Great men, as a rule, have had great mothers rather than great fathers. This was peculiarly true as to Lincoln. Though his mother died when he was but nine years of age, she had given him the blessings of her meagre education, had helped him to read and write, had inspired him with a love for

learning, and left such mental and moral impress upon the lad that he afterward said:

'All that I am and all that I hope to be, I owe to my angel mother. Blessings on her memory.'

Herndon, in his biography, relates an intimate talk that he once had with Lincoln concerning the latter's mother:

'She was the daughter of Lucy Hanks and a well-bred but obscure Virginia farmer or planter, and he (Lincoln) argued that from this last source came his power of analysis, his logic, his mental activity, his ambition, and all the qualities that distinguished him from the other members and descendants of the Hanks family.' [1]

(2) Again, from a little child Samson felt something mysterious stirring in his soul, ay, and in his physical nature. True, it was through that strong flesh of his that he fell. What then? If men of majestic intellect, and splendid achievements, and noble dreams, and the power of self-sacrifice be dragged down, stained and marred by besetting lusts and sins, are men of puny natures competent to judge such geniuses, who are exposed to extra temptation by reason of those very gifts of God that make it possible for them to do, for God and man, more than other men could do? We do not justify the sins of Samson, but let us put the question: Are we who are doing God's work guiltless of hypocrisy, half-heartedness, and worldliness? And shall we judge this man, who lived in another world than ours, and was exposed to strong temptations by the very qualities that made him serviceable to his age and God? God's heroes are not spotless. God takes them, if they will take Him.

¶ In entering the narrow channel of the Bermudas, the pilot stands not at the helm, but at the bows, looking down into the deep water, clear as crystal, to see the coral reef above which, or rather through which, he is threading his dangerous way. Sometimes there is scarcely twice the ship's own breadth between point and point; yet between those he must go, cannot pause, and ten feet divergence on either side would be shipwreck. He may do his work very awkwardly, and even be conscious of great mistakes; but with the most perfect humility he may utterly disclaim the power of anyone standing on the shore to judge his seamanship, who is looking along a smooth, level surface, instead of looking down upon a bed of rocks that lie beneath the surface. No wonder that his tacks, and turns, and zigzag eccentricities of course are perfectly unintelligible. 'I would have steered direct to that point.' 'Yes, my good friend, but did you see the rock? and if not, what can you know about the matter? Come up here, and then give me an opinion if you can.' Now, the pilot who is up there is not a wiser man than the other, but he has got a different point of view, and from that point he defies all human judgment, *until you go and sit beside him.*[1]

2. Samson's strength came, not from his hair, but from God. 'The Spirit of God came powerfully upon him.' Why do we not believe in God's Spirit more than we do, as a living power in practical, every-day life? God's Spirit gives the workman his skill, and the artist his visions of beauty and technical deftness of hand. God's Spirit stirs up the brave man to do his duty, and gives the martyr courage to die unflinchingly. And God's Spirit was in those heroes of old. Does this reduce our conception of the supernatural awfulness of the processes of redemption and sanctification—the work of the Spirit of God, who convinces men of sin and renews them again and again in the image of Christ? Surely not! But it brings the solemnity and sacredness of religion down into all that we call secular and common. God's Spirit is in our physical, mental, and moral life, quite as much as in our spiritual life. The supernatural of the Bible is nothing more than the natural of every-day life become articulate. Every man of real, original genius will tell you that his best thoughts, his most wonderful achievements, came to him. He was preparing, seeking, searching, trying to accomplish something, and could not. Suddenly a flash of light was cast upon him—a great wave

[1] R. M. Wanamaker, *The Voice of Lincoln*, 5.

[1] *Life and Letters of the Rev. F. W. Robertson*, 170.

of might lifted him out of himself and carried him away. It came to him!

Here stand I with my projects, ripe for
reason to grip on;
There they lie cold and grey,
Infertile germs that decay
Ere they come to seed, poor wandering stars
lost in the dark,
Dead matter without a spark.

For lo, the mind of man is as tinder that
waits for the lighting;
Knowledge may bring of its store
To keep the heat at the core;
But ever it stays for the fire that leaps from
soul to soul
Ere the flame and the smoke clouds roll.

And knowledge sleeps in the bud till the
spring wind calls it to leafage,
Waits for the wind to say
Shall it be March or May,
But the wind blows where it listeth, and
knowledge is but its thrall
And comes at the master's call.

O for the word that is winged and pierces
the heart and the marrow,
Spirit that calls to its kin,
Surfeit of strength within,
That bursts its shell and melts into the heart
of the crowd,
With God's own power endowed.[1]

3. The supernatural strength of Samson was undoubtedly accompanied by a proper physique. The motive-power had a strongly built engine on which to operate. But it is noteworthy that Samson is not described as a giant. He was no monster like Goliath, who had only that physical strength of which a little skill can make an end. The impression we derive from the story is that Samson was a well-made man, but not of enormous proportions. Much of his power is attributable to the character of the man: the skill, the wit, the unexpectedness of what he does, the audacity, the daring, the flash of his eye. But more than all, it is the impression he gives of supernatural power behind him, his own consciousness of the Spirit of God flashing out in all he does, the strange and weird prestige established around him, that gave him his extraordinary ascendency over his enemies. A personality like Samson's means a perilous exposure to the entrance into him and the mastery over him of the physical forces that were around him. No man lives his life *in vacuo*. The magnetic, emotional, passionate energy of Samson, so full of vivacity, meant for him an intensely sensitive and susceptible relation to all around that stirred the passions and forces of the flesh. A little man is saved by his littleness from the perils of a giant or a genius. All through the story, moreover, we see how God made use of Samson's lapses into sin to embroil him with the Philistines. Sin is not to be justified; but in estimating the character of Samson, we must take account of the way in which God sometimes over-rules men's evil deed to lift them to a loftier career.

¶ 'History,' says the historian Mr. Lecky, 'is full of examples of men who in great trials and emergencies have acted with admirable and persevering heroism, yet who readily succumbed to private vices and passions.' We do not need to go beyond Napoleon and Nelson for examples of men who were giants of strength on one side and weak on another. You who have lusty energies, warm blood, an eager spirit and a masterful will are likely to have vehement and imperious temptations from the pride of life and the appetites of the flesh. The man who, we are told, could rend a lion had lion-like passions that rent his life in twain. Conscious of conquering power, you are confident that you can do without wrestlings in prayer and the guardian grace of Christ. But you are the very men who need these defences the most. That strong animal in you is voracious and may become wild with unholy cravings. That pride of skill and power lays you open to flattery and the chance of sudden enrichment or popular favour at the cost of principle. You are as fallible in these directions as the weaklings whom you despise are in other ways; and you are not secure without the self-discipline of the humble and the watchful practice of the presence of God.

[1] Walter Ray, *Poems of Yesterday and To-Day*, 27.

Faust was strong and Goethe his interpreter was strong in intellect and will; yet each had his hours of weak recoil and his moral debacle. Satan was strong, as Milton depicted him, yet diabolic none the less. Bacon was one of England's statesmen; but did not pride of power tempt him to accept bribes and lead to his dishonour? It is one of the tragic things in life that the men of might and genius, the men who could conquer fortune or fame and win battles, have proved to be 'weak as other men,' defeated from lack of that moral element which is the indispensable of stable strength. You are no stronger than your moral convictions and your secret practices in the dark before God, and, more than most common-place people, you need the regulating regimen of earnest religion and the saving bracing grace of the Son of Man.[1]

## A Riddle.

Judg. xiv. 14.—'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.'

It is not strange that many a modern reader of the Bible should stumble over the story of Samson and ask how it is possible to believe that such a man was really raised up by God to do such work and live such a life. There is, however, a very simple principle which helps us to meet this difficulty, a principle in accordance with which the whole Bible is constructed. It is, that if God would make a revelation, He must do it in language, or other symbols of thought, which those to whom the revelation is given can understand. If you wish to explain anything to a child, you do not read him the definition given of it in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, but you use short and familiar words, and you point him to some specific example that has come within the limited range of his experience, from which he can grasp your idea. Even so, you do not suppose for a moment that the child has fully grasped your thought. All you hope to do is to give him some idea of what you mean which will serve his purpose until his mind has grown and he is able to take in the whole truth. In accordance with this recognized principle God has proceeded in the communication of His thought and will to men.

Any other principle would have made a revelation impossible, for it could never have been apprehended. If in the childhood of the world He had revealed the finished truths which we may learn from the Bible as a whole, He would have acted as uselessly as a teacher would do who would start little children to learn Euclid before they have mastered the multiplication table. The whole Bible illustrates the way in which, little by little, the mind of the Hebrews was led toward the ideal of truth and character which Jesus finally disclosed. But on the way we must ever expect to find merely movement toward the ideal, not its attainment; and we must estimate each particular phase of the history in the light of the specific circumstances in which it appears and the particular purpose it was meant to serve.

Samson appears to have been raised up to make the Israelites realize the truth that in God was their strength. He was consecrated to Jehovah from his birth, and his abstinence from wine and his uncut hair were the signs of his consecration. God endowed him with supernatural strength so long as he kept his Nazirite vow. In his personal character he shared all the vices and follies of his race and age. He was morally weak, just as they were weak. He delighted in adventure as a true mountaineer. He frolicked with danger like a genuine barbarian. But he was gigantically strong in body so long as he kept his vow. The country rang with the fame of his exploits. The Philistine oppressors trembled at his coming. What did he make them realize? Simply this, that God could give strength to those who kept His law. The truth was presented in a way that the rude marauders of both Judæa and Philistia would feel. Had he been a man of lofty spiritual character the lesson would not have been so impressive. Jehovah can give supernatural strength to those who observe His vows. The inference was, Let Israel obey Him, and she too will become strong again. In proportion as her

[1] R. E. Welsh, *Man to Man*, 117.

obedience grows will her strength and power grow.

Now with this understanding of the significance of the man, let us turn to the somewhat singular account of the riddle which he proposed to his Philistine companions. It will be found to have an even deeper meaning than they guessed or Samson intended, or than lies upon the surface of the narrative. The young giant was on his way to Timnath, a Philistine city, in company with his parents, going thither to see the woman whom he desired to make his wife. In the region between Dan and the sea-coast wild beasts were plentiful, and it chanced that a young lion sprang from his lair on the travellers. But, as if it had been a kid, Samson seized the beast and without a weapon in his hand rent it into pieces. He said nothing of the adventure even to his parents; but on the way back he sought the carcass of the lion and found that a swarm of bees had hived in it, and from the strange storehouse he took honey for himself and his parents. He seems to have seen in this incident an omen of good fortune. Probably he said to himself, 'As out of this lion honey has been brought forth, so out of the hated Philistines, who would tear Israel to pieces, shall there come by me a sweet blessing to my people.' At any rate, when, a short time later, his wedding-feast was being celebrated in Timnath, he proposed, in accordance with the custom of ancient times, this riddle to his Philistine guests and acquaintances. 'Out of the eater,' said he, 'came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. If ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments.' Of course they did not know the answer. At last they forced his bride to coax the answer from him, and on the last day of the wedding-feast they gave him their reply. 'What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?' said they.

The riddle, then, is, 'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.' That is to say, out of that which seems to consume and destroy have come forth nourishment and support; out of that which appears oppressive and terrible have come forth benediction and happiness. Is not this strange enough to be called a riddle, and yet is it not the riddle of human life, the fact which on every side confronts us?

1. First, it reminds us that the difficulties which we have to overcome in the pursuit of our most cherished projects are the means of our highest growth and greatest usefulness. This is so even in the sphere of common secular life. A man whose pathway is smooth and sunny and strewn with flowers does not usually reach so high a level of character as the one whose way is rough and dark and full of pitfalls. There are more who go wrong through having too many so-called blessings than there are who go wrong because life is too hard for them. Very few indeed are they who do not meet lions in the way, to whom life is not a struggle, if not with outward obstacles, at least with inward ones; and when a child of fortune does appear he is very apt to end as a child of misery. But the overcoming of obstacles makes the muscles of the human spirit strong and well developed. Conflict makes good soldiers. Wresting victory from the unwilling hands of destiny makes the enjoyment of it keener and leaves the victor strong for fresh enterprises.

¶ Stanley has written these words, which are worth noting as coming from the pen of one who has braved the dangers of the African forest and come out a hero. He says, 'The bigger the work, the greater the joy in doing it. That whole-hearted striving and wrestling with difficulty, the laying hold with firm grip and level head and calm resolution of the monster, and tugging and toiling and wrestling at it, to-day, to-morrow, and the next, until it is done—it is the soldier's creed of forward, ever forward; it is the man's faith that for this task he was born.' Such, too, has always been the testimony of those who have accomplished great things in life. Edmund Burke, that philosophic statesman, says, 'Difficulty is a severe instructor set over us by the supreme ordinance of a parental Guardian who knows us better than we know ourselves, as He loves us better too. He that

wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill; our antagonist is our helper.'[1]

2. If true in ordinary work, this is emphatically true in regard to the attainment of moral character. Those men have the deepest hold on truth who have had to fight for it; to whom doubt and unbelief have been not passing dreams, but horrible realities, and who have discovered, after many a storm and gale, the quiet harbour of faith. So temptation has a Divine work to do in the strengthening of moral fibre. We are, indeed, taught to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.' No man should needlessly covet it. It is not wise to stir up the lions that will be glad of a chance to devour us. Nevertheless, the Bible also says, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' Was not Jesus Himself ordained to pass through temptation? Was it not necessary for the perfecting of His power to save? Even so does the resisting of it make us all strong.

But notice: it is the resisting and conquering it that makes us strong, not the playing with evil or the reckless inviting of it. God has placed us in a world where we must fight if we would win; where the broad way leads to death and the way of life is strait and narrow; where we must play the part of soldiers if we would not play the part of slaves. Yet He has made this very fact to benefit those who strive for the good and the true. The very necessity of watchfulness forces them to learn how to stay awake. The struggle against evil makes them hate it more, and more completely triumph over it. They come out of the discipline of life with a special strength, which is infinitely greater than that with which they began the fray; and their souls have grown by the painful struggle into a vigorous faith and determination and special knowledge, which may be called truly gigantic.

Was the trial sore?
Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time!

[1] G. T. Purves.

Why comes temptation but for man to meet
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestaled in triumph?[1]

3. It is true also of that form of the riddle of life which is found in the universal mission of suffering and sorrow among men. By common admission this is the problem of problems, the dark enigma of human life. No soul is free from a share in the universal heritage of pain. There is scarcely a single life which has not at some time sounded the depths of darkness, over whom the great waters of anguish have not rolled. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together. There are times when human life seems unutterably sad, so brief and yet so full of suffering; so pleasant and yet so crowded with broken hopes and shattered longings. Below the noise of trade, the laughter of the children, and the mingled cries of the market-place and the forum, we may hear the solemn undertone that rises in all ages and places from the sorrows of humanity. And who can help asking, 'O Lord, how long?' Humanity is always more or less a 'man of sorrows,' and the longer we live the more are we apt to feel that in and by itself existence is profoundly sad. What the ultimate and complete solution of this enigma of suffering will be we do not pretend to say; yet this at least is clear, that those who have faith in God have found suffering and sorrow do more than anything else to make them spiritually strong. Their testimony is that they never grasped the reality of life until they did so amid tears; that they never understood their God or their Saviour till they had learned to mourn; that they never fully cast down self from its unlawful throne till they had yielded submission in suffering to God; that they never felt sin so hateful, the world so empty, God so real and heaven so near, as when affliction had come upon them. Every one of us, doubtless, knows something of this experience. We must, if we be at all children of God. Men have found in sorrow a priceless gain. They have discovered in the monster that would overwhelm them a faithful friend who has

[1] Browning, *The Ring and the Book.*

taught them most needful lessons. They have attained through the patient bearing of pain, through the humble endurance of trouble, a refinement of character, a sweetness of disposition, a gentle, sympathetic tenderness, a quiet but implicit trust, which has made them seem as beautiful to us as they must be dear to God. As Christ Himself wrested from His sorrows power to save us, came from Gethsemane and Calvary with the sweetest of all sympathy, the tenderest of all love, the strong Son of God, He has for ever cast at least this much light on the dark enigma, and taught us to believe that the eater will bring forth meat, and out of the strong there will come sweetness.

¶ The Life Radiant comes when one can as sincerely thank God for pain as for joy; when, after long groping in the darkness, clinging, indeed, to his faith in God (for without that he could not live an hour, though that faith be totally without sight), he suddenly realizes how a great sorrow has wrought in him a great result; that it has perfected and crystallized all that was nebulous in his faith, and that it has absolutely brought him into perfect rest in the Divine Will.[1]

## The 'Status Quo.'

Judg. xv. 11.—'Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us?'

THERE is a tendency among men, especially among men who have few ruling ideals, to be content with the 'status quo,' with things as they are. The miracle to the student of history is not the number of quarrels and revolts that have arisen from man's intolerance of wrong, but rather the amount that nations have borne and suffered in patience for the sake of peace. It is astonishing, and sometimes saddening, to discover how much humanity will put up with, of wrong and injustice, before it rises like an avenging fury on behalf of outraged righteousness. Time and again it has been shown in our own days how much it takes to move the national conscience. There is in all of us a tendency to be content with an accepted state of things. Philosophically, we would express this in the dictum that 'whatever is, is right,' and practically we would express it in Shakespeare's lines—'and makes us rather bear those ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of.'

This contentment with the 'status quo' may be either noble or ignoble, according to the moral worth of our attitude. On the one hand, the principle of contentment in man, what we might call the *conservative* principle of life, is good, since it saves us from the injustice that rash justice is so apt to inflict. It insures that progress, when it comes, will be reasoned, deliberate and balanced. It saves us from the riotous excess of unpractical idealists and reformers. But, on the other hand, contentment with a given state of life for ourselves and others may be the last desperate state of sin. If you will notice it, every devil whom Christ dispossessed first greeted Him with the cry 'Let us alone; what have we to do with thee?' Every reformer, every good soul who loves his brother-man, is faced with this dead wall of base resignation to an accepted state of things. Time makes most men, even the most idealistic, if not contented with, at least resigned to, the 'status quo' of their day, however bad it may be. The reason of this may lie in the popular idea that the good and the evil of any system stand and fall together. If you touch the one, you touch the other. And the great majority, rather than risk the portion of good that may exist in a present state of things, would put up with proven evil. That is the only theory that can account for the fact that a great nation of thinking beings tamely submits to the many blemishes in the moral and social life of their day, blemishes they could end in a moment if they rose as one man.

¶ What would the history of the world have been, had all men chosen that course? There would have been no Greek Marathon, no Scottish Bannockburn, no Swiss Morgarten! Ghastly as war is, when His patience is strained there are times when God Himself becomes 'the God of Battles.' What would have become of the religious and political liberties of Scotland, had men not dared to die on their

[1] Lilian Whiting.

hills rather than suffer a forced conscience or pay tribute to a spiritual oppressor? No! every step in the process by which we have come to be what we are, socially, intellectually, and spiritually, has been accomplished by a Divine intolerance of wrong on the part of those whom some moderates in these days are beginning to call fanatic![1]

1. We, too, are lovers of the 'status quo,' especially in the regions of morality and the rule of evil. We, too, like the men of Judah, are obsessed by the dominant idea that the Philistines have a right to rule over us, that evil, as such, has a right and a place in human life. As a Church we pervert the proverb and say, 'Better is an handful with quietness and leave to exist, than both hands full with vexation of spirit.' And as individuals we pass off the situation (and so pass off our personal responsibility as well) by saying that there can be nothing perfect on this side of time, because evil will always have its part in any system, for—'to err is human.' And from this arises, as with the men of Judah, the paralysis, the mental and spiritual paralysis, of an accepted idea. Give a man a belief that rules his conduct, and its immediate effect is to paralyse his action in some higher direction.

¶ A wise man once described poverty as 'the sepulchre of brave designs.' But we had no designs. We did have occasional longings for something larger and better, but they flickered out before they got any hold upon us. We had subservient minds and gave without grudge whatever respect was demanded of us. 'Our betters' was no mere empty phrase. It had the sanction of religion, and was to us a religious duty. It never occurred to us that respect might have a reciprocal relation. We expected nothing and, getting it, were not disappointed.

A new democratic conscience overspreads the world. It has reached Antrim. Part of that conscience is the right to life. I can hardly say we were too cowardly to assert it in those days. We were bespunked, servile, and submissive to an invisible authority, which to us was both law and gospel. It wasn't a case of making the most of a bad job. In our stupidity we never imagined it a bad job. Even if we had, we had no power to mend it. Our fathers having no property, had no votes. Nor would votes have helped the situation, for they would have been used for religious, and not for economic or political purposes.[1]

[1] J. Black.

2. How this contented acceptance of our present state of attainment may paralyse our further moral growth is worth our consideration. One hears the deadly principle expressed in phrases like these—that no man can be perfect; that every man has his failing, as every tree has its flaw. That is true, terribly true, in point of fact, but do not let us recognize it as true in point of *principle*, something under which we can shelter and excuse our moral failings! The Philistines of evil may have rule over our life in point of fact, but there is little hope for us the moment we admit that evil has *a right* to a place in our life—that man's life, by the constitution of this world, must be for ever under the dominion of sin. It is because men believe that form of devil's doctrine that Christian work is so frequently paralysed. We speak to a sinner about breaking with his sin, and he tells us he cannot—he almost believes he *must* fall. A drunkard believes that the debauch must run its course before he can hold up his head again. He comes to imagine that he cannot escape its periodic attack—and the best way is just to give it its course. He is under the heel of the Philistines, and there is no good disputing their rule.

The first thing for the Christian to believe is that he *need not* be under the power of sin. You say that this is a mere counsel of perfection and not possible for weak humanity. That may be, and yet what was the meaning of Christ's earthly life if not to show that human life lived to God can be free from the yoke of sin? We may not be able to realize that, but we can at least *believe* it. That's the point—let us believe it! The mere belief will work wonders; for when we begin to believe it, we have taken the first step towards realizing it. The men of Judah accepted the rule of the

[1] A. Irvine, *The Souls of Poor Folk*, 5, 17.

Philistines as a normal thing—and that broke Samson! And when men accept sin as the normal state even for the best—that breaks Christ!

¶ Christ's way with sinners was to love them, to believe in their recoverability. He tackled the outcasts as an object lesson in the possibilities of a loved humanity. To preach His Gospel to men is to announce your faith in a Divine something in them which will respond to this Divine something you bring to them. It is this spirit which makes Christianity the most daring of optimisms; which puts it into magnificent contrast with the fatalism of the East and the fatalism of the West. While Schopenhauer declares you can no more change the character of a bad man than the character of a tiger; while Nietzsche sneers at the weak and exalts force and repression, the Gospel goes on hoping and goes on saving.[1]

¶ In order to be free from the tyranny of sin, and in order to gain the natural liberty of a will in harmony with the will of the universe, there must be, first and foremost, a *desire* for the good. Without that desire the will is powerless. But let that desire exist, however feebly or intermittently, and the enslaved will is neither helpless nor hopeless. Let that desire become the strongest and intensest longing of the heart, and not only can the will be delivered from its oppression, but a change of the will can be brought about so complete, so pervasive of the whole being, so creative in power and goodness, that it may truly be described as a new birth of the soul.[2]

## The Secret of Strength.

Judg. xvi. 6.—'Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth.'

The mission of Samson had been indicated in the annunciation of his birth: 'He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.' This was the reason of his life. There is no life without a reason, though many, failing to discover this, live and die unreasonably. Our power is measured by our loyalty to God's purpose concerning us.

[1] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-Day*, 37.
[2] H. Begbie, *Life Changers*, 19.

As we think, then, of Samson's life, let us remember it in two periods; first in its strength, then in its fall.

1. Of Samson in his strength notice how God used him, with all his imperfections, and his crudities, just so long as he was true to the consecration of his life. A wild, irregular, unaccountable creature, full of passion, running into sin, he still kept, through it all, the broad birth-consecration of his life to God. Before he was born he was named a Nazirite. His unshorn locks were the witness of his consecration; wherever he went and men saw them floating wildly like a banner they knew that there went a man who, recklessly as he sometimes lived, terribly as he sometimes sinned, still knew and owned that he belonged to God, counted his strength a trust from God, and knew that he ought to use it not for himself but for the purpose of Him to whom it belonged. Such a man God could use. A wilful, wayward weapon he would often be in the Divine Hand, but, wilful and wayward as he was, far as he was from being a perfect servant, still the confession of servantship was in his heart, the consecration to the Lord was always the under-fact of his existence to himself, and so God used him.

And that is a perpetual truth. One man may be more wayward than another, the sort of force that men possess may differ vastly, may be in one man crude and coarse and in another fine; but, after all, the use that God is able to make of two men in this world depends on the amount of the consecration-consciousness that is in their lives and souls. One man is fine, clear, orderly, cultured, finished; but it has never entered into his thought that he lives for anyone besides himself. Another man is like Samson, wild and disorderly, passionate and boyish, frolicsome and wanton, but all the time, wrought into the very muscle of his strength, there is a tough, persistent consciousness that he belongs to God. Which does the work? Samson may go blundering through it, doing it in bad taste, dishonouring it very often, never seeming to realize how great the work is, never appearing to get hold

of its best motives or meanings, but after all doing it. The Philistines fall before him. He believes that God sent him. But the other man, who has no dream of any consecration, works out his fine conception, criticizes and refines, says what ought to be done, and does nothing. More and more clear it grows that it is the sense of consecration, however crude and rough be the characters in which it works, that God uses to change and save the world.

¶ It was at this time that Mr. Moody heard the words which marked the beginning of a new era in his life:

'The world has yet to see what God will do, with, and for, and through, and in, and by, the man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him.'

'He said "a man,"' thought Moody; 'he did not say a great man, nor a learned man, nor a rich man, nor a wise man, nor an eloquent man, nor a "smart" man, but simply "a man." I am a man, and it lies with the man himself whether he will, or will not, make that entire and full consecration. I will try my utmost to be that man.'

Being introduced one day by a London friend to Mr. Bewley of Dublin, the latter asked:

'Is this young man all O and O?'

'What do you mean by "O and O"?' said the friend.

'Is he Out and Out for Christ?' was the reply.

This remark deepened the impression made, and from that time forward the endeavour to be 'O and O' for Christ was supreme.[1]

2. If this was Samson's strength, then we can see where Samson's fall came from. *He lost his consecration.* It seemed a little thing. In a weak moment he let a wanton woman cut his seven-twisted locks of hair. But Samson was just the man to whom a symbol was everything. Those locks were so bound up with the vow that had been made before his birth that they not merely stood for, they *were,* his consecration. When he revealed the secret that his strength lay in them, and bade her cut them off, he knew that he was casting away that tie between his life and God's which had given him all his power.

Is not this what the story of Samson's fall really means for us—that if we sacrifice our consecration and our purpose all our strength is turned to feebleness? It is true even of our physique. The very strength of the arm is weaker when the man has no faith in his cause and no passionate desire for its triumph. The soul's devotion passes into the muscles and prevails to conquer the foe or break open the dungeon door. 'If ye have faith ye shall remove mountains'—those words of Jesus have almost a literal and physical truth. But it is truer of the other forms of strength, perhaps, than of the strength of the body; at least one wants to dwell on it most concerning them. Of intellectual strength it is supremely true that it gives up its vigour when it loses its moral purpose. How many witnesses there are of that! How many ages full of ability and wit, but with no earnestness! How many men, living to-day, or dead and buried long ago in graves from which no inspiration rises, who had strength of mind, clear brains, vivid imaginations, scholarship, taste, and yet were very weak. They laid no hand upon their time, they exercised no influence on men. What was the reason? There can be only one. They had no moral purpose. They cared nothing for the good of man or the glory of God. They had given up their consecration.

## The Departure of God.

**Judg. xvi. 20.—'He awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.'**

Is it possible for us to lose hold of God and not know it? He is our God and our Guide—may we, as we go through the pilgrimage of this world, let go His hand and wander on altogether unaware that we are travelling without our Leader? His grace reaches us along many channels—may these be choked up without our becoming conscious that we are no longer in connection with Him who is the source of our strength and the means of our

[1] *The Life of Dwight L. Moody,* 122.

spiritual progress? Is it possible we may be so mastered by our passions, or misled by our false ambitions, as to leave the still waters of peace and the nourishing pastures of revelation, and roam in the barren deserts without knowing that we have changed our place? Certainly that is the meaning of Samson's record.

1. What does it mean to lose God? It means that the sense of God has gone out of life. That is the awful, the indescribable, fact. It is not the loss of his dedicated hair! That was but the outward and visible sign of the dedication of the man; and the close-cropped hair is now the witness to the departure of the *man* with the departure of God. For a man cannot keep himself and lose his God. *The man goes,* and cannot be found any more. He is lost. Not only are the waving locks missing, but so is the man himself. Seemingly he is what he was. The physique is the same: huge, massive, commanding as before. Muscles and bones and nerves are as many, but the soul is gone out of him. He has lost his 'faith' in God, in his being in league with Him, His servant and messenger; and therefore he has lost faith in himself, lost his grip on duty, lost his courage, his will. He is no longer a completely dedicated man. He is not Jehovah's choice. He knows he is the slave of Delilah, and his departed locks are the sign of his separation from God, and his consequent loss of himself.

Here's my case. Of old I used to love him
This same unseen friend, before I knew:
Dream there was none like him, none above him,—
Wake to hope and trust my dream was true. . . .

All my days, I'll go the softlier, sadlier,
For that dream's sake! How forget that thrill
Through and through me as I thought 'The gladlier
Lives my friend because I love him still!' [1]

[1] Browning.

2. Again, what does it mean to lose God? It means poor work. It means beginning to build and stopping midway. It means striking victories ending in ghastly failures, immeasurable opulence slipping into utter moral bankruptcy. All that the historian can say of Samson is that 'he *began* to deliver Israel.' He finished nothing. He lost God, and could not complete His work. His was a poor, wasted life. Gideon, with not a tithe of his strength, did far better service. Joshua had little of his power and prowess, and yet wrought abiding good for his people. Samson left nothing behind him but the memories of his wasted energy and wild vengeance. 'He *began* to deliver Israel!' He did not accomplish his task. The Philistines came back again in all their riotous strength, and renewed their wasting tyrannies over the people. The land mourned by reason of the oppressors, and though Samson had checked the advances of the enemies of his country for a while, yet his life was without any enduring advantage.

3. Can men lose God and not know it? Yes. The critical point in the interpretation of Samson's life is that he lost his God-consciousness without being aware of it. 'He wist not that God had departed from him.' He thought all was well, when, in fact, all was lost. God—the great, the Eternal; the God to whom he was devoted by his mother and father in his childhood; the God who had given him signal victories over the foes of Israel; the God who was his Judge and Leader had slipped out of his life without his noticing it, until the fearful consequences of that departure stared him in the face.

It is the way with the things of the spirit. They come and go without observation. Eve's fall is not when she seizes the forbidden fruit, but when she yields to the desire for it. Achan's sin starts in coveting the Babylonian treasure. So Samson's fall is within, though he discovers it only when his efforts to recover and reassert himself are all unavailing. The tares are in the field, but it is not till they spring up that the farmer knows what the enemy has been doing. The microbe works out of sight, and it is only when its ravages

are felt and seen that the physician is called in. The Pharisees declare that they 'see'; Jesus regards the declaration as proof sufficient that they are 'blind,' and do not know it.

Therefore, let him that thinks he is standing securely take heed! He may have fallen already—if not actually into the hands of the Philistines, yet from steadfast faith in the living God, from full loyalty to his accepted ideals, from mastery of himself, and from all the noble purposes of the dedicated life.

¶ Busy, ambitious, over-engaged, amid the pressure of our preoccupation we lose our souls. That phrase used to be applied chiefly to the next world. However that may be, it certainly applies to this one. Men lose their souls—smother them, neglect them, maltreat them, crowd them out. As Richard Burton sings,

If I had the time to find a place
And sit me down full face to face
With my better self, that cannot show
In my daily life that rushes so:
It might be then I would see my soul
Was stumbling still toward the shining goal;
I might be nerved by the thought sublime—
If I had the time!

Multitudes of people so lose their souls.[1]

## The Second Chance.

Judg. xvi. 22.—'Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again.'

Samson was tired of being God's man because he was teased by a woman. And to hold the vow to God as lightly as that, was to hold in light esteem Him to whom that vow had been made. Since he had turned his back on God the Divinely-given strength was taken away. Hence the tragic words, 'He wist not that the Lord had departed from him.' He did not realize at once what had happened. He soon found out. Beaten, bound with brass, broken, blinded, banished, he was sent a slave to Gaza. Alas, this was the end! Alas, that he had treated so lightly the vow made to God! And now all was over. Nothing was left but torture, not even the hope of revenge. *But the hair of his head began to grow again.* With it came new opportunities, new power, so that in his death he slew more Philistines (and the story makes that his chief aim) than in his life.

Thank God for the gospel of the second chance, and, for that matter, the hundred and second chance! The world has a very different doctrine to teach. 'Three things there are which never come back to man—the sped arrow, the spoken word, the lost opportunity.' Or again, 'the Unseen Opponent in the great game of life . . . will allow no back moves and makes us pay in full for every blunder'—so Huxley.

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

— so Omar Khayyam. But when we turn to the Bible we read of a Potter in whose hands a vessel marred, utterly, hopelessly, irrevocably marred, became another vessel.

Men say 'I've failed again; it's no use trying any more; I've lost all hope of being what I once dreamed I might become. I've lost my passion. I've lost my opportunities. I've lost my ideals.' And the world listens sympathetically enough and says, 'How unfortunate! What a pity!' But there is One who gives men a second, yes, a hundred and second chance. And these are the words He uses: 'The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost'—another vessel, restored years, refound opportunities, recovered ideals, renewed strength. Man's extremity, God's opportunity. That is the language of grace; and that is the gospel for which men are hungry to-day.

1. Look for a moment at the tragedy of *the lost ideal.* We set out to serve Christ. We determine that we will be Christ's men and women, and show ourselves as such in every phase of our life. Prayer is daily and it is real. God is a Friend, and a Factor that counts in daily life. Then gradually we grow slack in prayer—careless. Prayer seems unreal, meaningless, like 'talking to nothing.'

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 102.

God seems to withdraw to a distant Heaven. He becomes remote, unconnected with business life. Worldly companions, doubtful books, the tendency of modern social and business life play their part. The cankers that are eating the heart out of this civilization of ours all have their effect. We lose touch with God. We make spasmodic efforts, but they do not last long. We are beginning to give up—it's not worth it.

We must pull ourselves together. We must rally the fleeing forces of good within ourselves. God is far more keen on making men and women of us than we have ever been. Let us take hold of the essential meaning of forgiveness. The past is blotted out, forgiven, forgotten, behind God's back. It must no longer be allowed to haunt us. There is no such thing to God, if we are penitent. By His grace we can stand where once we stood; not with the same innocence, but with a new knowledge and a new hatred of sin.

¶ Martin Luther once dreamed that Satan appeared to him showing him a long list of his sins. 'All these are your sins, and therefore you are mine,' said Satan. 'Are these all my sins?' 'No,' replied Satan. 'Then show me them all,' said Luther. Another long list was brought, and again he asked, 'Are these all?' 'Yes,' said Satan. 'Then,' answered Luther, 'take your pen and write across them, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." ' Satan immediately vanished! Never let forgiven sin cause you to doubt: sins forgiven are sins 'blotted out.' [1]

2. Look now at the tragedy of *the thwarted ambition*. There are men who are bitter in mind at the thought of what might have been if they had not failed in some examination, or if they had had better health, or if they had not had certain home ties, and the like. They think that life holds nothing worth while since they cannot tread the path of their desire. To them also comes the heartening message of the second chance.

One has read of a man who possessed a wide tract of forest land, and a great fire devoured it. He was seated on a half-burnt log with his head in his hands when suddenly his wandering eye caught in a rock, almost at his feet, the glitter of silver. The heat of the fire had opened a fissure in the rock disclosing a rich vein of the precious metal. Such things are always happening in life. God shuts our door that He may open His. He shuts the door which leads to the fulfilment of our desires and purposes that He may open the one that leads to His. He shuts the door which leads to the country of our dreams that He may open the one that leads beyond our wildest dreams.

Oliver Goldsmith, as someone has pointed out, was broken-hearted because, having taken his doctor's degree, he could not earn enough to keep himself. There was a time when he was taking round drugs for a local chemist. But he took the second chance, and it led him beyond his first purpose. Wordsworth desired of all things to become a party leader in France at the time of the French Revolution, and when his uncle stopped his financial supplies he thought himself very hardly treated indeed. But the second chance led him to become England's greatest Nature poet. Dickens at one period wanted to go on the stage, and was bitterly disappointed when this could not be, but the second chance increased his influence a thousandfold and made the minds of men for centuries the stage on which his actors play their parts.

Some will pass all this by as irrelevant to them. They are those who imagine that, for them, the best of life is over. Such people, sometimes too readily, feel that 'they have lived their life.' Ambition for them is dead. For achievement there is no time. 'Do not talk to us about second chances,' they say; 'if we had had your advantages . . . ', and age becomes almost bitter at that stage.

Is it not well to remember that 'it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful,' not successful; that what men call failure God often calls success; and *vice versa* —that still there is another chance, and then another, and another; and, most of all perhaps, that the chances we have taken have brought us further than the chances we coveted? Was it not R. L. S. who said that

[1] *The Happy Christian*, 32.

'all who have meant good work have done good work, though they died before they had time to sign it'?

Alfred Norris tells the story that when he was a little boy his father went away from home, and the laddie tried hard to do something worthy to show his father on his return. But though he had worked hard at making a boat, on the very night when his father was to return, the shapeless lump of wood looked little enough like a boat, and the boy laid it beside his pillow—a pillow wet with the tears of disappointment. Late at night the father came, and, seeing all with the interpreting eyes of love, took the poor attempt and carved a boat, so that his son, awakening, saw it, not as he had made it, but as he had dreamed it.

So it shall be for many who feel that all is lost of all that they meant to do and be. They thought there was no second chance. They will find they were taking it all the time. Lost —there isn't such a word!

All that thy child's mistake fancies as lost
I have stored up for thee at home.
Rise, clasp my hand, and come.

They thought they could never be like Christ, but on that eternal morning, incredulous, they will awaken, in His likeness, satisfied.[1]

## The Pillars of the House.

Judg. xvi. 26.—'Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.'

The story is of a part with ancient barbarities. The Philistines, on the feast of Dagon their god, bring Samson, their inveterate foe, now at length delivered into their power, in fetters into their temple, with laughter and rhythmic hand-clapping, and the singing of an improvised doggerel—all as one may hear and witness to-day on a festival in the unchanging East. With feats of buffoonery they compel Samson to entertain them; and when they have tired him out they let him slip almost unnoticed to lean against the pillars of the house, little dreaming that he is about to show them a feat which will give them scant entertainment.

There was a vast concourse of men and women upon the roof of the house—three thousand is the number given, but that need not be pressed, as it is customary in the East to express in a good big round figure a crowd whose dimensions are more than usually large. Moreover, probably as many would be crushed to death in the consequent panic and stampede as in the actual collapse of the roof. The house itself was also full of men and women, the Philistine nobility. That pathetic blind figure is giving his entertainment in the open air. On the roof of the large deep portico is gathered the crowd of common people, the 'galleryites,' while in the portico itself, shaded from the sun's glare and yet in the cool of the open air, are the lords of the Philistines and their satellites and harems.

How would that portico be supported? Obviously by two or more stout pillars, whose removal would bring the laden roof crashing down upon those who stood beneath it. The greatest weight of the crowd would be in front, pressing forward to miss nothing of the fun. And what exactly did Samson do? Professor Stewart Macalister, excavating at Gezer, in a stratum some three hundred years older than the time of Samson, found a building which answered the required conditions of the story to a remarkable extent. 'That it was a temple of some sort was indicated by religious emblems found within its precincts, and by a waste-pit full of sheep bones, apparently those of sacrificial victims. The building was much ruined, only the foundations remaining; but enough was left to enable us to restore it with a considerable degree of probability.' The column bases, the essential architectural element, remain. These are roughly flattened on the upper surface, but are not prepared by chiselling for carrying worked pillars of stone at all. 'Anything resembling stone pillars or pillar drums is of the rarest possible occurrence. It is, in fact, certain that these bases were meant for the support, not of stone pillars, but of vertical posts of wood, like the 'cedar pillars' of Solomon's house (1 Kings vii. 2), and were intended to prevent their com-

[1] Leslie D. Weatherhead.

paratively narrow ends from sinking down into the ground under the pressure of whatever weight they had to bear.'

What happened was that Samson, with one last output of that great strength which he had so often misused, jerked the wooden uprights out of their stone sockets, and slid them out. The two middle supports gone, the remainder were unable to carry the enormous strain suddenly put upon them. The sport of the Philistines was over. The man whom they had feared in his life spread greater terror in his death. Their Philistine laughter and the wayward Hebrew's prayer to Jehovah were alike quenched in the shrieks and the silence of death.

Who was the blinder, we say to ourselves—the strong man with the sightless eyeballs, or the Philistine fools, giggling and jesting on the edge of their own graves? They thought that they had tamed his fury and shorn him of his strength, and curbed his power to do them mischief, when they made him blind and compelled him to grind in their mill. They were to discover that he was far more dangerous to the commonweal in his seeming impotence than ever he had been in the heyday of his liberty. Slowly mankind learns the lesson of this old story—that it is not wise or safe to fetter and to blind a giant. One day he will rise in fearsome strength to take an awful revenge upon those who have done him wrong. Have we not seen the tragedy re-enacted on the stage of one of the great countries of Europe, where for years free speech, a free press, freedom of action were denied to the democracy? The giant was kept chained and blind, compelled to turn the social and industrial mill. How awful the revenge as he has pulled down the whole house about their ears, overwhelming himself and all his masters in the cataclysm!

Thirty-six years ago Principal Caird, in an address on 'The Science of History,' said: 'That demand of the conscience for retributive justice, which is often bewildered and baffled when we contemplate unpunished wrongs, prosperous baseness, selfishness, and the like, is it not at least partially met when we turn to observe the sure entail of evil in the moral life of nations? A man may prey upon his kind and suffer no loss, but a nation cannot. It is only in fiction that the villain comes to an untimely end; in real life he not seldom dies in the odour of sanctity: but for the sins of society the day of vengeance never fails to come. Is there no running sore, no internal ulcer troubling and harassing at this moment the corporate life of England, and of which the explanation can only be sought in the selfish recklessness, oppression, and wrong of a bygone period of her history? . . . And in this their present degradation can we not discern the silent operation of that eternal justice which, though its cyclic movement far exceeds the compass of our little life, yet in the long run, seen on the vaster scale of history, visits iniquity and wrong with a slow but inevitable retribution?'

These sentiments are being rewritten for us to-day in red. The silent operation of the eternal justice seems to have speeded up even while we gaze awestruck. If we do not altogether realize the iniquity of chains and blinding irons, there has surely been enough shaking of the pillars of our whole civilization in this land, as in all the others, to quench the Philistine laughter and to put an end to our ill-timed Philistine fooling. The eternal justice is the ally of every ill-treated creature. While we have been looking on at the humiliation of souls crushed in the social and industrial mill, or made to serve the sport of the worshippers of Dagon and Mammon, we have been preparing our own downfall, as surely, as inevitably, as did those Philistines of old.

But there is in this pathetic prayer of Samson's a deeper note. The lad to whom it was addressed had no thought of the awful ruin that was about to overtake them all. In his ears it was but the cry of a weary giant, the request of a desperate, blind, and sin-ruined man. 'Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.' Give him something that he may lean upon—great foundation truths—now that he is in such desperate straits. When a man, when a nation, has neutralized immense

advantages of natural gifts through indwelling sin, it is no time for pretty moral essays and the prophesying of smooth things. 'Tell me the old, old story—let me feel the pillars.' Civilization to-day is a blinded giant, immensely strong physically and intellectually, but suffering through disregard of the injunctions of God and flouting of the moral law and the restraints of decency. The only course is to do what that lad did for Samson—get him back against the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that he may lean upon them.

And what are the pillars of the state and of the whole house of life whereupon it standeth? The mercy and love of God in Christ, the forgiveness of sin, the message of the evangel.

A brilliant woman, wit, authoress, whose house provided a kind of salon where one met all the notabilities in town, died recently. Her last words, the last request of that bright, irresponsible, vivacious, independent woman, was the pathetic request, 'Can't you give me something to take hold of?' In her last darkness she was groping for one of the seven pillars that the Divine Wisdom hath hewn out; she was crying, 'Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.' That is still the cry of humanity, when it becomes articulate to-day. 'Can't you give me something to take hold of?' And when you have tried all other means of relieving the desperate situation; when you have drafted all your Parliamentary Bills, and founded your League of Nations, and got your Whitley Councils, and granted democracy all the reforms for which it clamours, and done everything that you can think of to deliver Samson out of the hands of the Philistines, he will still pray you to lead him back to the central things, to the basal things, to the great columns that support the house of life. For this is the last request that he will make of you; this is the heart-prayer of humanity in its hour of agony to those who hold it by the hand; 'Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.'[1]

[1] H. L. Simpson, *Put forth by the Moon*, 98ff.

## When Gods Go.

**Judg. xviii. 24.—'Ye have taken away my gods which I made.'**

This singularly vivid and arresting story is one of insult added to injury. The lapse of three thousand years has not robbed it of its dramatic quality and pathos. The tribe of Dan found the country in which they were settled too strait for them, and they sent out five commissioners to prospect for them in the neighbouring lands. In the course of their journey the prospectors were hospitably entertained at the house of one Micah, who dwelt on the skirts of Mount Ephraim. Micah lived in state, and had a domestic chaplain. He also possessed household gods in which he trusted, and a genuine sacrificial vestment which he prized. The spies noted these things. Presently they returned home, having found what they wanted—a large land where the people dwelt secure and unsuspicious. To the conquest of this country a band of six hundred marauders was dispatched soon after, and these in their turn came to the house of Micah. They repaid his recent generous hospitality with theft—the theft of his gods and his vestment—and the perversion of his house-priest. When Micah discovered his loss he collected his retainers and pursued the marauders, and the pathetic plaint of the text was the remonstrance which he addressed to them when he overtook them.

Unhappily this species of robbery is by no means infrequent. It comes about in a variety of ways. Although in nearly every case it indicates that something is amiss about the religion whose precious things lie so easy a prey to accident, yet the loss itself is none the less real or painful. It may even be appalling. Compared with this, one thinks, every other form of distress quite pales. Before the agony of a soul that sits alone, bereft of its spiritual treasure, its faith in the unseen and its hope for eternity, who would not stand still with a mute and shuddering compassion? Can any bereavement kill like that?

1. There is, first, an intellectual robbery.

There are gods of the understanding which in these days a thinking man is not unlikely to lose. The loss is in some cases serious, in others not. We have all of us been brought up, like Micah, in the belief and fear of Jehovah, the God of revelation. Substantially that is the true faith; but it does not follow that there are no unworthy elements adhering to it in our minds, or that we hold it with entire intelligence. In every religion there are things essential and things only accessory: parts of one's creed which are vital, and parts also which are not. Betwixt these it is not always easy to discriminate. Usages, forms of worship, consecrated phrases and the like, are so many modes of conceiving or expressing Divine realities. They are the body only, which encloses and reveals what is really essential in our religion. But how easily may the reverence which we entertain for God and for His eternal truth pass over to this external form and drapery of the faith! How readily may we attach to the ritual or the creed or the intellectual conceptions in which we have been trained that heart-confidence, clinging love, and religious awe which really are due only to the Divine Saviour Himself! Especially if a man shut himself up, like Micah, in his own 'house of gods,' refusing, for fear of the distraction of the time, to look abroad and see how God is conceived of or worshipped by other men. The effect of a narrow isolated education naturally comes to be that everything about one's religion, down to its most trivial circumstances, wears in one's eyes a semi-Divine sacredness. To touch a fringe is like touching the Ark. Each minute prescription of the fathers and every prepossession of our upbringing appears no less certain or important than the Divinity of Christ or the forgiveness of sins.

The true defence lies in holding and possessing God by deeper ties of attachment than opinion, or tradition, or intellectual belief. Know God in Christ as the God of your conscience, whose mercy in the Cross has silenced the voice of guilt and awakened in you the love of holiness. Know Him as the indwelling Spirit who inspires and answers your prayers. Know Him as the best of Fathers and the most steadfast of Friends. Get into links of confidential fellowship with the Eternal, so that you cannot for a moment question His nearness without denying your own deepest experience. Then no intellectual difficulty can rob you of Him. The sanctuary of the intellect may be pillaged; but the sanctuary of the devout spirit, of the new life born of God, never! 'He that believeth hath the witness in himself.'

¶ Dr. Whyte's preaching was personal, ethical, inward, and it dealt but sparingly with speculative or social problems. In his later years he seemed to stand at a distance from many of the intellectual problems which most persistently confronted the young minds of his time. He was once asked by an interviewer if he found much scepticism among young men, and replied, 'I hardly know that I am competent to say. Certainly sceptical young men may not come my way. Perhaps they know my line of work and do not seek my advice.' He characteristically added that what he feared most among young men and women was 'indifference, and indolence, and neglect of spiritual things.' But this limitation in the scope of his work carried with it no loss of intellectual quality, nor did his personality ever lose its influence over young and eager spirits. He did not directly meet our difficulties, as other teachers of the day in great measure met them. But he did something higher and rarer. He stood through all that he said and all that he was, as a living proof of the unquestionable reality and final importance of the spiritual life. It might be hard to reconcile our apprehension of this with the theories of science or philosophy, or with the disorders of the social life around us; but the testimony itself could not be set aside. In face of all unsolved enigmas we felt that the experiences of which Alexander Whyte spoke, and the Power which had made him what he was, were no fantasies of the imagination, but must in the long-run prove to be the unshakable foundations of the deepest life and the truest knowledge. Others might defend Christianity by the weapons of the intellect: he did so by the evidence of an

inspired personality—by vision, not by argument.[1]

2. From the gods of the understanding pass to the gods of the affections. Although the heart once rightly settled on God in Christ cannot suffer robbery, yet our affections too often play the part of Micah over again by making to themselves gods. Something we set up in a holy place of its own, to bow ourselves down before it and serve it with our best. It is not God; but our foolish imagination decks it out in attributes like God's. We certainly expect it to do for us what only God can do. We make sacrifices for it greater than we make for God Himself. We prize it before everything else, because we dream that, so long as it is ours, nothing can quite destroy our happiness or overwhelm our spirits. Thus we begin to arrange our whole existence with this dear object for its centre, making the welfare of the whole contingent on the permanence of that one idol. It is pathetic to watch the passionate fondness with which tender hearts are found clinging to such treasures, doting on them like a new-made mother over her babe. The youth may make such a divinity of his bride, the mother of her son. So long as no adversity, like an armed band, passes that way, so long is the home counted rich and the life full. The present yields delight, and a hope vast and confident discounts its shining future.

The kindest thing, sometimes, which God can do for us, is to take our idol away. Let us not miscall such an act by the name of cruelty. The false god was screening from us the face of the true God. Like Micah's graven image, our self-made divinity kept us from seeing truly, or loving fully, or enjoying perfectly, the Eternal Jehovah. Instead of filling the air with passionate and unavailing cries of despair, were it not better for us to turn back to the rifled solitary sanctuary of our own heart, and with shame-covered face sit down there, silent and repentant, before Him of whom no enemy can deprive us? The home is not quite so desolate as we imagine, nor the life utterly empty. In the vacant seat is come to sit One to whom all this while it did by right pertain; and if we but let Him, He will be more to us than ten sons!

How weak the gods of this world are—
  And weaker yet their worship made me!
I have been an idolater
  Of three—and three times they betrayed me!

Mine oldest worshipping was given
  To natural Beauty, ay residing
In bowery earth and starry heaven,
  In ebbing sea, and river gliding.

But natural Beauty shuts her bosom
  To what the natural feelings tell!
Albeit I sighed, the trees would blossom—
  Albeit I smiled, the blossoms fell.

Then left I earthly sights, to wander
  Amid a grove of name divine,
Where bay-reflecting streams meander,
  And Moloch Fame hath reared a shrine.

Not green, but black, is that reflection;
  On rocky beds those waters lie;
That grove hath chillness and dejection—
    How could I sing? I had to sigh.

Last, human Love, thy Lares greeting,
  To rest and warmth I vowed my years.
To rest? how wild my pulse is beating!
  To warmth? ah me! my burning tears.

Aye, *they* may burn—though thou be frozen
  By death, and changes wint'ring on!
Fame!—Beauty—idols madly chosen—
  Were yet of gold; but *thou* art STONE!

Crumble like stone! my voice no longer
  Shall wail their names, who silent be:
There is a voice that soundeth stronger
  'My daughter, give thine heart to *Me*.'

Lord! take mine heart! O first and fairest,
  Whom all creation's ends shall hear;
Who deathless love in death declarest!
  None else is beauteous—famous—dear![1]

[1] G. F. Barbour, *Alexander Whyte*, 304.

[1] E. B. Browning.

3. To lose the idols which our own affections have made is by no means the worst form in which a loss like Micah's may be sustained. There is a spiritual form of religious bereavement which, if rarer by far, is yet harder to deal with. Though God in Christ, once spiritually possessed as the soul's portion, cannot be snatched from a man by any adversary, nevertheless there is an experience, not infrequent with devout souls, which they are prone to call a losing of their God. Old Matthew Henry, commenting on this text, says, 'Deserted souls, that are lamenting after the Lord, may well admire, as Micah did, you should ask what ails them, for the tokens of God's favour are suspended, His comforts are withdrawn, and what have they more?' It is a distress which, if long continued for any cause, threatens the reason, and is apt to make existence itself intolerable. The intellectual loss of one's beliefs about God is bad enough; the heart's loss of loved ones whom it idolized is possibly worse; but worst of all is that bereavement which the spiritual nature apprehends when He who was once its light of life has hidden His face away!

Yet, if people in this state of religious melancholy could be got to think calmly, they might see that what they have lost is not really God at all, but only certain bright and pleasant moods of their own spirit, certain states of confidence and peace which at other times they have enjoyed. These they have perhaps been taking for inseparable or indubitable pledges of the Divine presence and favour; just as Micah supposed his Levite and his ephod to guarantee the blessing of Jehovah. No mistake could be greater. Religious comfort is no infallible sign of grace. Certainly religious distress is no sign that we are fallen from grace. On the contrary, if the conscious fellowship of your Heavenly Father be so dear to your heart that the absence of it causes you continual pain; if this be the source of your pain, that you apprehend God to be displeased, and in displeasure to have withdrawn Himself; then it is most certain that you are one of His children, near to His grace. Most certainly it is not Himself God has removed from you, not His favour, not His pity; it is at worst the peace that comes from being assured of His forgiveness. But with you He still is, though after a secret and unperceived fashion, hidden, but not withdrawn; unseen, not absent. Be diligent to purge yourself of whatever may justly give occasion to this trial of your faith; only recollect that it is a trial of faith, and that your appropriate duty is to wait for Him, crying after Him, and trusting Him though He slay.

Brother, thy heart is cold,
And round thy prayer
There spreads no balmy kindness of the air;
And in the text where dwelt of old
A message rich and manifold,
Silence inhabits, and a grey despair.

Vex not thine aching head—
Our God is wise:
By many a route He sends His folk supplies:
To one He dealeth household bread,
And for another, fiercely led
By desperate marches, lo! the manna lies.

And this I surely know—
The Wise is just:
He doth not starve the heart that fain would trust:
Thy faith shall wake in happy glow,
Or, passing when the night is low,
Shall build immortal pinions from her dust.[1]

## The Beyond in Religion.

**Judg. xviii. 24.—'Ye have taken away my gods . . . and what have I more?'**

It was natural that Micah should deplore the loss of his images. There has always been a tendency to mistake the outward and visible for the inward and spiritual, the shadow for the substance, the husk for the kernel; to think or to act as if these were all, and to forget the beyond; even to imagine that if these are taken from us, nothing is left. Idolatry in its grosser forms has passed away, and it is not likely to return; but the tendency still exists to pay undue deference to what is visible and material and transitory, while we ignore those unseen and abiding

[1] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 37.

elements in which alone the true vitality of religion consists. Let us trace this tendency in three directions.

1. Religion is enshrined in *ceremonies*. Not only may forms be useful in religion, they are, to a certain extent, necessary. In Christian worship there has always been more or less of form, ceremonial, ritual. Men have tried at various times to maintain a religion which should be purely spiritual, but the effort has not in the long run been successful. Indeed, the very fact that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ became incarnate, that around His Divine Being He draped a human form, so that what was Divine might be understood through what was human, shows—not to mention other reasons—that the outward and visible are intended to be the complements, not the opposites, of the inward and invisible. The question for us is, What have we *more?* Do our worship, our forms, our ceremonies lead us to what is beyond? Are we relying on the accessories, or on the everlasting truths they enshrine? What have we more? If these should be taken away, can we rest upon the imperishable facts that underlie them?

¶ I am perfectly able to enjoy ritualism and æsthetic development of religious ceremony for the purpose of stirring emotion or 'amusement.' I value that word, so common amongst religious people abroad; the exclamation on your return from a Function is often: 'I hope *Monsieur s'est bien amusé.*' But directly the histrionic or æsthetic is spoken of as giving honour to God in any other respect than as edifying or 'amusing' His children, then I think the border-line of Truth has been transgressed. The true and highest ritual of Christian life is, as St. James says, 'to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to make no alliance with the world.'[1]

2. But religion is not only enshrined in form; it is embodied in *phrases*. Churches have their creeds and their catechisms. Religious truth must find its expression in doctrine, in portable forms which are easily remembered, though the doctrine probably expresses very inadequately the truth it inculcates. A sound creed is the basis of a strong character; and one can scarcely imagine a vigorous, healthy Christian life without a backbone of fixed beliefs, such as can be expressed in words.

Religious phrases are necessary, but then again the question meets us, 'What have we *more?*' We have our doctrines, our creeds, our catechisms; but do they lead us to what is beyond? Do we reach forth with the strong grasp of a living faith to the unchanging and eternal truths which the words embody? Do we remember that it is one thing to say 'I believe in God,' another to believe in God with heart and soul as the great Factor in our lives? Phrases may change; but God does not change. The language that expresses the religious aspirations of one generation may not exactly express the thought and feeling of the next: but the eternal truths remain. Truth cannot change, though it may be conveyed through different means. Creed is important, but character is greater than creed. Life is more than orthodoxy, and goodness than correct opinions. It is not the sound phrases, still less the form and formal expressions of belief, that are of supreme importance, but faith, righteousness, holiness, meekness, love. These are the soul of religion. These are the things, unseen and eternal, which in the sight of God are of great price.

¶ As to dogmas—what are they? A dogma I take to be a truth packed for transportation. As the primitive man gathers the rich living fruit in some tropical forest, and it is dried and packed away and put on board the ship and sent half around the world, and then unshipped, unpacked, and its infolded life made once more live and active as it becomes food or medicine for living men of far more complicated lives and needs than they had who gathered it; so truth is gathered and compressed in dogma, but the dogma must be opened into truth again, and unfold its native life in richer forms of power before it can be either spiritual medicine or spiritual food. Authority is the ship in which the dogma sails. I get my dogma from authority as I get my

[1] R. W. Corbet, *Letters from a Mystic of the Present Day*, 129.

package from the ship. But it is the soul, the conscience, which turns the dogma back again to truth. No soul can feed on dogma, as no man can eat the package which is landed on the wharf. Authority may bring what dogma has been given it to bring. Only the dogma which can be opened into truth can live. Only the truth which the soul appropriates gives life. Authority is responsible for safe packing and safe transportation, but the real living part of the process is when, after the unpacking has taken place, the conscience tries to turn the dogma which it has received back again into truth.[1]

3. Once more, religion is enshrined not only in ceremonies and creeds, but also in *persons*. As a matter of fact, all our earlier impressions, and many of our later impressions in religion, have come to us through persons. The mother who taught our infant lips to pray, the teacher who first instructed us in the simple truths of the Gospel, the pastor at whose feet we sat as children, the friend so noble and so brave on whom we leaned for counsel and guidance—these and others first brought religion to our notice as the great power in the world. It was not so much what they said, or even what they did, as what they were. They were to us the living presentment of religion. To them we looked for direction and support, to them we turned for guidance in our perplexities, on them we relied for inspiration and encouragement; and sometimes there seem to be none who can help us now as they helped us then.

No one can overrate the power and the value of religious training and Christian friendship. The example of a godly mother, the worth of a real Christ-like friend—who can measure the power of influences such as these? Yet even the best and purest and holiest of earthly influences may sometimes be almost the idol whose removal may be the wreck of our hopes. What of the religion of the young lad who goes forth from a holy and happy village home into the crowded thoroughfares of the great city, or that of the lad who exchanges the sympathy of Christian surroundings at home for the barren loneliness of some distant colony, where there are no friends to cheer and help him, and no house of God within twenty miles Will he stand fast in the future? Will he be true to the teaching of his boyhood in the presence of increasing temptations? Will he keep to the old faith in the land that is new? He will not, if his faith is merely second-hand. He will not, if he has never really made his parents' belief his own belief, if his religion has been simply imported from without, and has never struck its roots firm and deep in his own soul. We know how hard it is to remain firm and steadfast when the one in whom we trusted is taken from us, and we are left to fight life's battles alone; how often our faith and hope and even our love seem to be buried with our dear dead, and how, when they are gone, all that made life worth living seems gone also.

The great question is, 'What have I *more?*' I have Christian influence around me, I have religious friends; but what have I more? If God should see fit to take away these, have I learnt to trust in the One Friend from whom neither distance nor death can part? Can I lean on Him, when every earthly prop is removed?

> One by one, like leaves from a tree,
> All my faiths have forsaken me;
> But the stars above my head
> Burn in white and delicate red,
> And beneath my feet the earth
> Brings the sturdy grass to birth.
> I who was content to be
> But a silken-singing tree,
> But a rustle of delight
> In the wistful heart of night,
> I have lost the leaves that knew
> Touch of rain and weight of dew.
> Blinded by a leafy crown
> I looked neither up nor down—
> But the leaves that fall and die
> Have left me room to see the sky;
> Now for the first time I know
> Stars above and earth below.[1]

[1] Phillips **Brooks**, *Essays and Addresses*, 114.

[1] **Sarah Teasdale.**

# THE BOOK OF RUTH

## INTRODUCTION

THE ancient narratives of the Book of Judges carry us back to a half-barbarous age of struggle and disorder, memorable chiefly for the deeds of Israel's heroes. The Book of Ruth, although the scene is laid in the same age, gives us a very different picture. It introduces us to the peaceful life of the home and of the village, with its sorrows and joys, its wholesome industry and kindly virtues. It shows us a life which is by no means barren of heroic qualities, but these take the form of unselfish affection and generosity and loyalty to the ties of kindred. It pictures a simple community, tenacious of long established customs, and penetrated throughout by a spirit of unaffected piety. No doubt the picture is idealized; but the author, so far from inventing facts which never existed, is evidently describing a life with which he was familiar.

1. Is the Book of Ruth, then, of the same date as the Book of Judges? There are certain linguistic features, such as the use of a few Aramaic words, which seem to demand a rather late date. These peculiarities, however, may be dialectic, and as the genealogy at the end is generally believed to be a later addition, there is no direct proof that the writing is of a later date than that of Judges. The objection sometimes made, that its peaceful character is out of keeping with the rude turbulence of the period of the Judges, has been answered in this way: How often has it happened when memoirs and diaries written in times of war and revolution have come to be published that scarce a trace of the public troubles is to be found in their pages. The storms which disturb the surface leave the depths absolutely tranquil. And so the quiet rural life with its peaceful routine of labour, its kindly customs, its unrecorded idylls and tragedies must have gone on unimpeded in many villages of Israel all through the troublous times of the pre-monarchial period. It has been said that the *dramatis personæ* of the Book of Ruth are too gentle and kindly for their time. But the existence of such characters is evidenced by the Book of Judges itself in one of its cruellest stories. In the episode of the Levite and his concubine (Judg. xix.), the old man who, coming from his work in the fields, meets the wayfarer in the streets, and with a courtesy worthy of a king invites him into his house (vers. 16-21), is, according to his station, a personage as noble and benevolent as Boaz himself. The description of this man occurs in what is admittedly one of the oldest chapters of Judges, and there is therefore no reason to think that the story of Ruth owes any of its charm to the elements borrowed from a later age. We may accept it as an accurate picture of some phases of domestic life 'in the days when the Judges ruled.'

It is the fashion to discredit the Book of Ruth. No doubt, it has reached us in a very late edition, revised in the light of later theology and legislation. But we accept the main facts of the story. If the historical value of the tale had been open to dispute after the return from Babylon, the Jewish 'lawyers' would never have admitted into their Canon a book which represents David, the ancestor of the Messiah, as descended from a Moabitess.

2. The author is unknown. What was his purpose in writing? His purpose was not merely to give an idyllic description of a God-fearing, pastoral community: this forms only the background from which his principal persons stand out. It is their characters and the events of their lives that make up the substance of his story. The sorrows of Naomi, which have not deprived her of that rarest of gifts, 'a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathize'; the devotion of Ruth, which leads her to forget her own people and her father's house, and fulfil her duty by the family of her dead husband; the generosity of Boaz, shown by his compassion for the young widow, and then by taking upon himself the redemption of Naomi's property, and, crowning act of all, by his marrying Ruth as part of the kinsman's obligation: these are the author's chief concern, and his way of handling them gives its charm and value to the Book. At the same time the story afforded him an opportunity to bring out certain points. One was the fact that a Moabite woman, the daughter of an alien race and faith, could be a pattern of the highest virtues, and faithful to the customs of her adopted country (ii. 11, iii. 9f.). Another was the commendable piety of a next-of-kin marriage with a childless widow (ch. iv.); not necessarily a levirate marriage (Deut. xxv. 5ff.), for Boaz was not the *levir*, or brother-in-law, of Ruth's dead husband, but a marriage analogous to it in principle and object.

3. Some wonder has been expressed by commentators and divines that the Book of Ruth should have been included in the Sacred Canon; that a love story, charming and idyllic as it is, should have found a place among the Scriptures of the Prophets. But, though we have a strange and irrational trick of smiling a little contemptuously, or a little ironically, when so much as the name of 'love' is mentioned, yet no man who reflects on how great a part love plays in human life, and how much the sweetness and dignity of human life depend upon it, and how closely the love of our neighbour is connected with the love of God, will marvel much that God should have moved a holy man to record the love of Ruth for Naomi, or even the love of Boaz for Ruth, and so to set us 'a pattern how we ought to live.' The place of Ruth in Holy Writ needs no other vindication than this—that, in her, love grew to heroism. But if it did, an ample vindication might be found in the fact that this Book shows us that every pure and unselfish affection leads to God, and is acceptable to Him; that it reveals Him to us as no less pleased by the goodness of a heathen than by that of a Hebrew: and that it also shows us that, in their better moods, the very Jews knew that there was no respect of persons with Him. Nor, in vindicating the honour conferred on this 'love story,' should we omit to note a fact in entire and happy accord with the catholic spirit of the Book—that the name of Ruth the Moabitess stands in the genealogy of that mighty Redeemer and Lord who broke down the wall of partition which long divided the 'circumcision' from the 'uncircumcision'; and 'in whom there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free,' since men of every race and of every condition become 'one new man' in Him.

Those who would read this story aright must cultivate a certain spiritual mood; they must in a measure absorb and breathe the spirit of the Book itself. Antiquity surrounds and secludes it like the wilderness around an oasis; and there has thus been preserved to it its own old-world simplicity and innocence. This should restrain our present-day spirit as we enter a place so enclosed and guarded, and not only should forbid our rudely disturbing or even too rudely gazing, but should subdue our soul to reverence and affection. We must be in sympathy with all that is lovely and of good report, if we are here to love; and love we must, if we are to understand.

## Famine.

Ruth i. 1.—'There was a famine in the land.'

1. So the story begins with a famine. Under the same great headlines the generations of men from the beginning have been writing their history; and much of it in the days of

old was written under this one—a famine in the land. Though we know the resource and comfort of kindlier times, the words still strangely affect us, almost as if in a subconscious memory something of their ancient meaning survived. The possibility of many a lonely *trek* seems to linger in them. When we hear them, they make us, in a measure, awe-struck and afraid; and we feel as though we might ourselves need some day to go to the gate of the homestead, or even to the bounds of the homeland, and scan what lies beyond. They also come back to us after a while out of silence, faint as a sigh and like an echo from our own soul; and then they begin to gather around them an atmosphere in which the horizon of other worlds is visible. And when the words, as here, are made a Word of God, and when they tell us of what He allowed to happen long ago, we are brought to realize that their deeper truth may lie undiscovered as yet in life's larger plan, and hints seem to be given of what, in the spiritual evolution of things, will be when all else fails us but God.

2. 'There was a famine in the land.' There is always a famine. Not always a famine of bread and a thirst for water: that is the poorest of all famines; the real famine is a famine of the heart—a famine of love, trust, sympathy, longing for help and not finding it, hoping and praying for sympathy and care, and the hope dying without an answer. Even that is not the worst famine of all:—'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord'; there shall be no voice from heaven: the communication between the worlds shall be cut off, and men who would try to pray will have their prayers sent back as the only possible reply; but even these days, properly received, may be turned to high advantage. Religion has now become a satiety. We can go to church so much that we hardly care to go at all. The gospel is preached to us in so many ways that we have become quite critical about them, and have 'opinions' concerning them—what hungry man asks metaphysical questions about the bread that is set before him in the pangs of his necessity? Were there more conscious need there would be less criticism and infinitely greater enjoyment.

Father, I cry to thee for bread
  With hungred longing, eager prayer;
Thou hear'st, and givest me instead
  More hunger and a half-despair.

O Lord, how long? My days decline,
  My youth is lapped in memories old;
I need not bread alone, but wine—
  See, cup and hand to thee I hold!

And yet thou givest: thanks, O Lord,
  That still my heart with hunger faints!
The day will come when at thy board
  I sit, forgetting all my plaints.

If rain must come and winds must blow,
  And I pore long o'er dim-seen chart,
Yet, Lord, let not the hunger go,
  And keep the faintness at my heart.[1]

## Widowed.

Ruth i. 5.—'And the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.'

Between the lines of this story may be read the story of all the widowhood of the world. Betwixt then and now, silent in long array, widows stand in the wide interspace. Some of them are conspicuous: Rizpah, Rachel, she of Nain by the bier, and she by the Cross—the mother of the Son of God; most of them are nameless; all of them are desolate. We might reverently doubt if the world was well ordered, were there not compensation for sorrow and sighing so prolonged, so uncomforted, so unexplained. Our deepest nature avers that such notes should not have been struck out of woman's heart—that instrument so capable of pain—unless, elsewhere in the universe of God and audible to His ear, they were to be met by other notes in harmony with which they unite to form some justifying and eternal melody. In connection with all this grief and tear-shed of Time, God seems to

[1] George Macdonald.

charge Himself and His Eternity with responsibility, when He thus remembers Naomi, and perpetuates her pain, and inweaves her complaint with His own everlasting Word. The relating of these details of a life-sorrow in the case of Naomi shows how intimately God knows all, and pities all, and that He has a place for all in His great and perfect plan.

What befell these widows of Moab and Judah long ago God is still permitting to befall human life in all lands every day. This page of Scripture is a Divinely sanctioned transcript from universal human history. Sooner or later God deals in such a way with all of us that we are made to feel that the world is not our home and are fain to confess ourselves strangers and pilgrims. He makes some old before their time; He blights hopes that have but budded; He stirs up the nest and leaves the bare stone; He sends the weariest on pilgrimage; He spreads famine-hunger around homes and sends home-hunger into hearts; He takes from Judah to Moab, and again from Moab to Judah; He strips so bare and leaves so bereft that He compels the cry, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there in none upon earth that I desire beside thee.' And when all this is done, God never repents or regrets; it is done deliberately and of set purpose, according to some wise and tender motive beyond our present knowing. This is the deeper life-lesson of what is here told us in so studied and artistic a way. The object of this tale of an old-time sorrow is not merely to work compassion in our heart, but rather to show us how God hears in heaven—

> When the widow weeps to Him,
> Sad and lone and low.

For, by taking up this one case in His Book so vividly and sympathetically, God declares, not in words of direct statement, but in the whole circumstance and sequence of a living story, that He is aware of the long woe of His world, and holds His own great Eternal purpose answerable when Death shatters a thousand homes and changes the love of woman, in its finest earthly powers as that of wife and mother, to solitude and pain.

> And, O belovèd voices, upon which
> Ours passionately call because ere long
> Ye brake off in the middle of that song
> We sang together softly, to enrich
> The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
> The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,
> Knowing ye are not lost for ay among
> The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
> In Heaven, to hold our idols: and albeit
> He brake them to our faces, and denied
> That our close kisses should impair their white,—
> I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
> The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified
> New Memnons singing in the great God-light.[1]

## Bread.

**Ruth i. 6.—'She had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.'**

Throughout the Bible, as in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, this cheapest and meanest of gifts is set forth as the symbol, the evidence, and the very vehicle of God's visitation to men. 'The Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.' The harvest, as the writer believed, was nothing less than a visit of God to the nation, and so a sign to Israel that it was His own people. All nations had harvests, and so the Hebrew prophets began to perceive what the Gospel afterwards declared, and what was later evidenced by the birth of the Catholic Church on the Day of Pentecost, that every nation must be a people of God. The harvest of this year in our own land is the Lord's visitation of us, and His sign to us that we, as fully as ever Israel was, are His people.

1. Naomi, an emigrant in the foreign land of Moab, 'heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people'—that is, her own nation and fatherland Israel—'in giving them bread.' A poor, desolate, half-ruined widow is the first actress in this godly

[1] E. B. Browning.

drama. For her sake, insignificant as she looks upon the world's gay stage, there is a harvest in Israel. For the sake of such as Naomi, the Lord visits His people in all lands, 'giving them bread.' Is it not the office of His ordained servants to ask whether they are getting what He is 'giving them'? A nation's harvest is here called the Lord's visitation: it is a new coming of the Lord to the whole people. He comes again, so to speak, with the people's yearly bread in His hand.

Whenever He comes it is as Saviour and Judge. 'The harvest,' said the Lord to His apostles, 'is the end of the world'—'the consummation of the age.' A secular harvest is a rehearsal, or a revelation, of that eternal harvest at which He opens His book and judges the nations, separating them one from another, blessing some and cursing others, according as they have recognized Him, have fed and consoled Him, in the hungry and thirsty, poor and naked, outcast and persecuted who are inseparable from Him. We ought to ask ourselves, remembering the unseen great white Throne, whether it be in any degree our fault, politically and socially, if the Lord does not visit His people in our own land with bread enough and to spare? We ought to ask ourselves whether it be in any degree our fault that so many of His people—uncomforted Naomis, worse than unwedded Ruths—perish for lack of bread? If we are obliged to send to other peoples to buy some of the bread which the Lord has given them, is it because He has given us too little land? Or is it because we are not insisting that the land which He has given us shall be put to the use for which He gave it, shall be made directly profitable to poor Naomis and all His people, and less luxuriously profitable to a very few of them?

¶ A verdict of 'Death from natural causes' was returned at Lambeth in the case of a poor woman who was proved to have starved herself to death to feed her children. What will the verdict of posterity be upon a social system which not only allows things like that to happen but formally records its opinion that they are natural? [1]

[1] *Daily News.*

2. If there be something pentecostal in the harvest, there is an abiding pentecostal character in the harvest festival itself. We celebrate it in the house of Jesus Christ, who is the Bread of Life—the sustenance of every human spirit, soul, and body. The everyday social life of the Church during her pentecostal days is exhibited to us in the Acts of the Apostles as a sort of continuous harvest festival. Our first fathers and mothers in the Catholic faith and fellowship, 'breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.' They recognized the grace and loving-kindness of the world's Saviour in taking and consecrating the most vulgar need of the world's life to serve as the symbol and vehicle of the highest and deepest need of the individual and the race—joyful communion with the Eternal Unity, and with one another in Him. Each ordinary meal became to them, as it ought to be to the Christian, a household eucharist, a little harvest festival, a sign that the God of all was visiting them 'in giving them bread.' But the exultant faith of the young Church could not confine itself within the household. The Churchman was more than a family man, more than a citizen. He was the member of a body which had been called out to bear witness to the filial relation of every man, woman, and child to the Eternal. The Church's joyous faith could outwardly exhibit the fullness of its contents for humanity only in one simple form; it could be satisfied with nothing narrower than that which we now call Socialism. Its socialism was instinctive; it was prophetic; it was not scientific. It saw, by the light of the Holy Spirit, that '*our* daily bread' could be nothing meaner than the social gift of God to His 'people'—not merely an individual gift to as many persons as could get it, but His gift for 'distribution' to every person that 'had need.'

¶ Every great moral campaign in history has been a protest against sacrilege. This is true of the Crusades. When those knights headed for the Holy Land on a campaign that would cost the lives of so many of them, it was because they felt that something on earth, even though only an empty sepulchre in Pal-

estine, was sacred and must not be desecrated. So, too, the driving power of all modern social movements is resentment against sacrilege. Child labour is sacrilege, for little children are holy and ought not to be ground up in our industrial order. War is sacrilege, for the personalities of men and women, boys and girls are sacred, and war debauches them. The liquor traffic is sacrilege, for it seeks profit from the damnation of human souls. Twelve-hour shifts in industry and inadequate compensation and indecent conditions of living are sacrilege, for they wrong human personality.

One often hears it said that religion has no business to try to decide economic and international questions. That statement can be so interpreted as to be true. But one thing is the business of religion—it always has been the business of religion—to lay its hands upon life's holy places and insist that they shall not be violated. The ministers of religion used to emphasize the sanctity of temples, shrines, the bones of saints, and holy relics. Now, however, religion will lay her hands on the real sanctity—human personality—and will fight with all the fierceness of the crusaders against its profanation.[1]

## More Than Emotion.

Ruth i. 14. 'They lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.'

Both Orpah and Ruth wept, for they had come to an end, and the chapter which was closing had brought marriage to them, and love, and hope, and bitter loss. Orpah kissed Naomi, for a girl likes to be kind, and the older woman had been a friend; yet, having kissed her, she turned her face towards Moab. But Ruth clave to Naomi, as in Genesis (ii. 24) a husband is enjoined to cleave to his wife. For her mother-in-law's sake she made surrender of home and religion; and against devotion like that it is silently declared that no technicality of law can have force. According to the statute, she ought not to have been admitted to a place in Israel, but the Hebrews were entirely sure that she was; and the force which redressed the disadvantage of birth was this whole-hearted committing of herself to the side of Israel, because Naomi was there.

If we widen out the question beyond the single case, we may recognize in the story two types of religion, of which only one has any value. Confessedly others than Orpah remain outside, mere Moabites to the end, whilst Ruth and hosts of companions with exactly the same amount of native disability are found within—and gloriously within. What accounts for so sharp a contrast? Both women were moved, but Orpah had nothing else than emotion, which expended itself in tears and embraces; whilst in Ruth the emotion had energy enough to carry her life and will along with it.

1. There is *a religion which,* practically, *is without emotion.* Of this we have no example in the story, though in the world it is exceedingly common. Those who content themselves with it are often sober and diligent men, loyal to their word and faithful to their wives, and not forgetful of their church. But in their religion there is no uplifting power; it is of the earth, and is fitted for inhabitants of this world. But the Kingdom of God, as Jesus preached it, is more than a kingdom of virtuous earth; in its beginnings it was the creation of His love and passion, and it was offered to men, without condition, as to immortal creatures who have the larger part of their existence beyond the confines of this world. If we are to be citizens of it, we must have wings to lift us, that we may look down on life as He did, viewing its concerns *sub specie aeternitatis,* as they appear from the standpoint of eternity. Matthew Arnold defined religion as 'morality touched with emotion,' thus acknowledging that an element of this sort is indispensable; but the morality is not only touched with emotion, it is coloured and made glorious by it. And if in any man religion attains its end, that must be because it is inhabited by love and wonder, and the desire of things above.

2. There is *a religion which is mere emotion.*

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character,* 53.

This is Orpah's type, in which what is lacking is will and persistence. Richard Steele, the essayist, wrote one morning to his wife after a racketing night, 'Dear Prue, sober or not I am ever yours, R. S.' and there is no doubt that, for the moment, he meant what he said. But the fact was that, sober or not, he was not ever hers. He might return to her, but it required no very commanding interest to catch his mind away elsewhere, whilst poor Prue had to wait suspicious and indignant at home. A great deal of religion is of this quality, fugitive and volatile.

Many people do not realize the shallowness of their own feeling. They 'pay themselves with words,' as the French say, finding a becoming phrase so satisfying that they ask for nothing more. In a sense, we all know that words are no sufficient indication of feeling. Goneril and Regan, King Lear's heartless daughters, were profuse in their professions of devotion, whilst Cordelia, who was willing to give her life for her father, was utterly awkward and stinted in speech :—

I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth : I love your majesty
According to my bond, nor more nor less.

We do not need Shakespeare to tell us this; and yet in religion, and even in social life, we continue to delude ourselves, accepting the passing sentiment or the fit expression of it as if it were a full discharge of every debt.

3. But there is also *a religion compact of emotion and purpose.* This is Ruth's type, and to it all barriers are withdrawn, and the outcast passes in unchallenged to take her place with the family of God. Ruth can have known little of what lay in front of her. If she spoke Hebrew, it was no doubt stumblingly and with an accent; and in all the peculiarities of Hebrew life and usage which parted Bethlehem from Moab she would blunder often and have to make appeal for patience. Most of all, in religion and its practices she was barely at the threshold, only she had a mind that took her past the threshold and prepared her for anything that might be involved in being Hebrew now and not Moabite. And that steady casting of her vote on the nobler side secured her entrance, and, in God's mercy, it secures an entrance still.

To those who are halting at the door, well inclined to Christ's way, and yet undecided, and to those within the door whose task it should be to welcome and encourage, there is admonition even in the minor detail of the story. It is fine to see how promptly Ruth was taken at her word, and not held in some middle stage of probation. In Israel the name of Moabite was a grave burden of disadvantage, and odious tales were told of the origin of the tribes which sprang from Lot. But nothing of this suspicion and dislike appears in the talk of the village gossips. 'All the town knoweth that thou art a virtuous woman' (iii. 11) was their report of her, and to Naomi they said (iv. 15), 'Thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, is better to thee than seven sons.' It is very pretty. In that jealously exclusive people she was not kept at arm's length; and in their tradition she sits enthroned, though she was born an outcast beyond recovery. She is mother in Israel, mother of David, mother of Jesus the Christ, so gloriously has she entered within the pale, because with heart and will she sought for it.[1]

## Ruth's Choice.

Ruth i. 14.—'Ruth clave unto her.'

1. Ruth's choice was the choosing of one who loved her well. How tenderly Naomi loved her daughters is seen in her earnest pleading for their return. Had she loved them less, she would never have hesitated to carry them over Jordan into Bethlehem. It was her love that gave her such a deep concern that her dear children should have a happy future. And Ruth knew this. She trusted Naomi because Naomi loved her so. She chose to go with Naomi over the hills, for she knew that there would be always strength and sunshine, if she were living near the love of Naomi's heart. That is the reason why every true mother

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Repentance unto Life*, 192ff.

prays that the boys and girls may climb the hills with Christ. He loves them with a love so deep and generous that even Naomi's is shallow beside it. He came to earth, He bled, He died for them. It is because He first loved *us* that we love *Him*, and set our faces to the hills with Him, to make for the house-mystical of bread.

Me Lord? can'st thou misspend
  One word, misplace one look on me?
Call'st me thy Love, thy Friend?
  Can this poor soul the object be
Of these love-glances, those life-kindling eyes?
What? I the Centre of thy arms' embraces?
  Of all thy labour I the prize?
  Love never mocks, Truth never lies.
Oh how I quake: Hope fear, fear hope displaces:
I would, but cannot hope: such wondrous love amazes.[1]

2. Again, Ruth's choice was taken in the teeth of difficulties. The past was against her—she had been cradled in a heathen home and trained in the worship of immoral gods. Orpah was against her—Orpah had turned and was travelling home again, and Orpah was the elder of the two. Her mother seemed against her—it was hard to resist these tears from Naomi's eyes, these earnest pleadings from Naomi's lips. The future was against her—how cheerless seemed the prospect of living an exile, and never setting eyes on home again! These things were fighting against the choice of Ruth. These whispering voices called her back to Moab. But the girl was a heroine. There was in her heart a depth of devotion to Naomi. And neither height, nor depth, nor length, nor breadth would separate her from the love of Naomi now. Is it difficult for us to choose the right? Is it supremely hard to resolve to follow Jesus? There is something in the past that holds us back, perhaps, or there is the example of a friend, a sister. There is the dreary prospect for the future; there is the voice of Jesus bidding us count the cost. Ruth knew that long ago. These pleas kept ringing in her heart upon that hill. But she played the heroine for Naomi, and we may play the hero for Jesus. Ruth stood and triumphed, and we, her brothers and sisters, may have her crown.

¶ He was a great favourite with his professors, who, through Dr. Caird, offered him the position of Professor of Greek in an Australian University. This offer, made to a student not of their communion, showed great magnanimity of spirit. Carrying with it an emolument of six hundred pounds a year, this offer was one which few students in his circumstances would have refused. But he did refuse it. His refusal of the office was a surprise to his teacher, who learned that day that, though dormant, the spirit of the Covenanters was not yet dead. 'Will you reject this offer, to become a Cameronian minister at eighty pounds a year?' 'I cannot help it, sir,' was the reply, 'I have made up my mind to be a minister.'[1]

3. Once more, Ruth's choice was marked by an entire surrender. Sometimes when we are going on a journey with a friend, we lay down conditions before we start. We shall travel only by a certain road; we shall stop only so long at certain towns. But when Ruth set out with Naomi that morning she never dreamed of any stipulation. She had taken Mahlon once for better or for worse, and she was taking Naomi the same way now. Let Naomi lead, Ruth will always follow. Let Naomi halt, Ruth will rest there. Ruth will not dictate; she wants a lowly place. Her choice is marked by an entire surrender. Now, once we have started out to follow Christ, let us remember that we must follow Ruth. There is no hope of peace or power or joy, save on the basis of complete surrender. If Ruth had quarrelled with Naomi about the route, how hearts would have ached upon that homeward track! If Ruth had girded because the hills were steep, and the valleys were damp, and the Reubenites were coarse, what a sorry party would have entered Bethlehem! But, 'whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge,' and they came to Bethlehem with

[1] P. Fletcher.

[1] A. L. Struthers, *Life and Letters of J. P. Struthers, M.A.*, 22.

songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. We understand the parable? Then let us live it out. 'These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.'

## A Harvest Field.

Ruth ii. 4.—'And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee.'

This chapter gives us, incidentally, a graphic picture of an ancient harvest scene. The field is thick with waving barley. The reapers cut their way into it with sickles, grasping the ears till their arms are full. Behind them, the women gather up the armfuls and bind them into sheaves. Still further in the rear follow the widow and the stranger, who, according to the Hebrew law, have a right to glean after the reapers. The overseer is busy urging on the reapers and granting or refusing admission to the gleaners. Vessels filled, probably, with the rough local wine are at hand, that the heated and thirsty labourers may refresh themselves at need. The 'house,' with its barns, threshing-floors, and various out-buildings, stands in, or near, the field; and here the weary may rest when the heat and burden of the day prove too great for their strength. Here, too, under the shade of some spreading tree, men and women gather at meal-time, and are supplied with parched corn, and with bread, which they dip in a cool and strengthening mixture of vinegar and oil and water. As the day advances, the master of the estate comes to see how the work goes on. With grave pious courtesy he salutes his 'young men' with the words, 'Jehovah be with you'; and they reply, 'Jehovah bless thee.'

1. The farmer invoked a Divine blessing on the labours of his men, and the reapers in turn expressed the hope that God would bless their master. The spirit of piety was present in that field. God was acknowledged there. Is it so with ourselves? Do we remember the old injunction, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths'? There is a plain command, and, as we so often find in the Word of God, there is a promise linked to its fulfilment; acknowledge Him in all things, and in all things He will direct thee. Do we thus acknowledge Him? Do we allow God to find a place in what we are pleased to call our 'secular' employments? Are 'all our works'—daily duties as well as religious acts, our harvest labours as well as our Sabbath devotions—begun, continued, and ended in Him?

Ah, some there be that make, in sordid wise,
The House of God a house of merchandise:
But others make—who after Christ have trod—
A house of merchandise the House of God.[1]

2. A spirit of generosity spread from one to another in the cornfield of Bethlehem—the spirit which prompted all alike to think of sharing with others the blessings they had themselves received. Boaz the husbandman himself, seeing a woman in his field in the threadbare garments of poverty and widowhood, bids her draw near and glean all that she needs without fear of molestation. 'Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn' (vers. 8, 9). Such was the example of generosity set by the proprietor of the land. And a good example is always contagious; it percolates downward from class to class. We soon find the men, rough and rude as they often were in the mixed company drawn from all quarters at harvest-tide, copying the example of Boaz, and extending their generosity in turn to the widowed gleaner. They were not to be outdone in such a matter by their employer, but when the meal-time came round they received her into their company, and they shared with her their meal. (According to the Revised Version it was they who 'reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed and left.').

[1] Frederick Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 26.

And Ruth, poor widowed, penniless Ruth, what could she do to copy such an example? What could she contribute to complete this picture of generosity? Not much; she could but bring, as it were, her two mites, but she brought them willingly and cast them into the Lord's treasury of love. She thought of another widow as poor as herself; she remembered Naomi at home, childless as well as husbandless, aged as well as penniless, and she brought her back a share of her own gleanings. For Naomi she reserved, too, some of the corn which the reapers had roasted for her. 'She took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed' (ver. 18).

Ruth had a good account to give of her ephah of barley, and also of the parched corn which she set before Naomi for her supper. It is in small things that we best find out what sort of stuff a person is made of. In matters great and grave, we are on our guard. When others are watching us, then we watch ourselves, and are on our best behaviour. But in little things that which is in us is sure to find its way out. Ruth brought home for her mother's supper a portion of what Boaz had given to her for her own dinner. This is a trivial circumstance, and Ruth never dreamed that we or anyone else would hear of it. But a small key doth oft unlock a large box; and this homely fact lets in light upon the spirit and disposition of Naomi's daughter-in-law.

¶ When Whyte graduated, his friend [Alexander Barrie] gave him the four volumes of Alford's *Greek Testament*, with the following inscription on the fly-leaf of volume I.:

ALEXANDRO WHYTE, A.M.,
AMICO DILECTO ET MAGNOPERE AESTIMATO
HOC SIGNUM CARITATIS PARVUM
DONAVIT
A. O. BARRIE.
*April 7th*, 1862.[1]

It was no *signum parvum* of Barrie's esteem that he should have found the £3 12s. needed to supply his friend with the best Greek Testament then to be obtained. Rather it was an example, when viewed in conjunction with the 3s. 6d. a week for lodgings, of the comparative estimate of bodily and spiritual needs which both men shared, and which Whyte showed the year before when he pledged his scanty earnings for months ahead in order to become a subscriber to the twelve-volume edition of Goodwin's Works. But neither ever regretted the expenditure, and nearly sixty years later, when Dr. Whyte passed away, the four volumes of Alford and the twelve of Goodwin stood close to his bedside.[1]

[1] 'Given by A. O. Barrie to Alexander Whyte, M.A., a dear and very greatly esteemed friend, as a small token of his affection.'

## Handfuls.

Ruth ii. 15, 16.—'And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.'

So that was the woman who had come to the village with Naomi, and of whom Boaz had heard so much! and she had answered to her name at his call, made touching obeisance and syllabled out in broken Hebrew her gratitude; and it had all come upon him with the unexpectedness of a vision in a dream. Yet it might be fitter to say of it that it was an awaking to a reality, or as a dream coming true. He had had his own mental picture of a woman far-travelled and travel-weary, who came of late to the village, who was full of loving-kindness and came and went on gracious errands; and he had either heard, or fancied he had heard, that she was agile and bright,—

Softly swayed, with native gesture free.

And now, there she stood before him! and he recalled what he had been told, and said it all over to himself as he looked on her, slowly translating his dream-vision into fact the while: 'It hath been fully shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thy husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of

[1] G. F. Barbour, *Alexander Whyte*, 86.

thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.' Gazing as he spoke and quietly investing her one by one with those virtues which he named out of his memory, he was allowing her to become before his eyes the living impersonation of them—a subtle process intellectually, and one that insensibly implicated the heart; and ere it all was said and done, she was standing apparelled in charm, and he stood entangled in a spell. He had long been thrifty of his love, but this looks as if a fine spoiler might now rob where he has garnered. An ideal of womanhood was realized before his eyes, and his was not human nature if from that hour he was free to be and to do as before.

As the reapers gather for their meal, he bids Ruth sit with them; and when the meal is over, he bids her, instead of following the reapers afar off, glean among the sheaves—nay, bids the reapers pull out a few ears from those they gather in their arms and let them fall where she will find them. Above all, he charges them not to 'shame' her, not to jest or romp in their rude country fashion so as to put her to the blush. In any harvest field a woman, and especially a comely woman, to whom such extraordinary favour was shown by the 'master,' would only too surely become a mark for evil tongues. And we can, therefore, well understand why Boaz, who showed his true courtesy by resolving to help Ruth in her own way, laid so stringent a rein on the young men's lips. Happily, too, the overseer was her friend, or, despite the strict injunction of Boaz, Ruth might have suffered much and deeply from the men who cut the barley and the women who bound it into sheaves.

1. How kind Boaz was to this stranger in the field every verse of this sweet chapter shows, and if we wish a model of the kindly heart, let us halt at Boaz, and we shall find it there. There is some kindness that is extremely foolish. It is the weak good-nature of a thoughtless heart. It is not just, it is not persevering, it is not the sweet-faced mother of self-denial. True kindness is a noble virtue. There is thought, there is strength, there is something of sacrifice, something of God, about it, and as we study this simple record of the kindness of Boaz, we find these marks of true kindness there. Do you see its thoughtfulness? Ruth is to go with her own sex to glean. The young men are specially charged to beware of rudeness. Do you note its piety? Boaz was kind because he felt it was God's will that the maid who had come under His wings to rest should be favoured so (ver. 12). Do you see its humility and self-forgetfulness? It was none but the master who reached the parched corn to her—and she a gleaner (ver. 14). Do you mark its inventiveness? One can see the wonder in the young men's eyes when Boaz whispered to them to drop some handfuls (ver. 16). Try to be kind like that. Think shame to let Boaz beat you. Do not be kind with a rush and a swirl, and then be selfish all the long afternoon. Go at it seriously. Think of it. Invent some sweet surprises for your friend to-day. And do all under a sense of the marvellous kindness of that loving God who sent His only-begotten Son from heaven, to be your Saviour and your kindest Friend.

2. But this story of the benevolence of Boaz is also a parable.

(1) It indicates the way in which God does His good works among men. Did you ever think how true it is that God maintains our self-respect when He gives to us? How very, very little He gives, as it were, out of hand; how very, very little He gives unless we do something to get the gift. When we pray for bread, He does not give us the bread; He gives us a piece of land, and a plough, and a hoe, and we must work for the bread. When we pray for clothing, He does not send the clothing. He gives us that out of which we can by our own industry make the clothing. All the gifts of God—most of them, at all events—have to be wrought by us to become of any use to ourselves. It is certainly true in the material realm. It is true also in the intellectual realm. The world is full of wisdom, full of the resources out of which wisdom is gathered; but we must gather it; we cannot get our wisdom ready-made. It is not handed to us. And this is equally true in the spiritual realm. God no more hands the bread

of life ready-made than He hands the material bread ready-made. You must knead your own dough, bake your own bread, make your own garments, contribute your own service, do your own share of work, if you would get the benefit of any of God's good gifts.

¶ Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, and a great statesman, had an idle brother who once came and asked to be made a great man. 'Brother,' replied the Bishop, 'if your plough is broken, I'll pay for the mending of it; or, if your ox should die, I'll buy you another; but I cannot make a great man of you; a ploughman I found you, and I fear a ploughman I must leave you.'[1]

(2) And as God sets us to work to get His gifts, so God conceals Himself in the giving. What is Nature but a word for God? What is Nature but His minister and servant? What is Nature but the elements that are dropping the great sheaves of wheat in our path, and we do not know that God is hiding behind the hedge smiling at our joy in our discovery. God conceals Himself. He ministers through others and takes, as to Himself, the thanks we give to them. Love that comes into our homes—mother-love, father-love, husband-love, wife-love, child-love, brother-love—all these are but God's love filtered down to us. And He hides Himself, and enjoys our gratitude all the more that it is paid to wife, to husband, to children, to father, to mother, to friend, and not direct to Him, for He Himself, as it were, lets not His left hand know what His right hand does. When Christ would feed the five thousand by the shores of the Sea of Galilee, He did not distribute the bread Himself; He brake and blessed it and gave to His disciples, and they passed it on. As then, so now, so always, He filters down His good things, through minister, through prophet, through teacher, through friend, through companion, through Nature, through all the various instrumentalities, and hides Himself, the Invisible One, behind the hedge, and looks on smiling and rejoicing in our joy.[1]

¶ It was a hot August afternoon, and the clouds had long withheld their shadow and their rain, and a little flower lay dying. As it lay there looking piteously up into the heavens, and longing for refreshment, a drop fell down, and then another, and another, and another, all about it, and fed its roots; and the flower, refreshed and revived and brought back to life, lifted up its face and said, 'Drops, I thank you; you have saved my life.' And the Drops said, 'Thank not us; the Cloud sent us.' And the Flower lifted up its face toward the heavens and said, 'O Cloud, in thy summer glory, I thank thee; thou hast saved my life.' And the Cloud said, 'Thank not me; the Sun drew me from the ocean, and the Wind wafted me here; thank Sun, thank Wind.' And the Flower, perplexed and puzzled, turned its face hither and thither, saying to the Sun and to the Wind, 'O Sun, I thank thee—thou hast brought this water from the far-off ocean; I thank thee, O Wind, that on thy wings thou didst bear it here for my refreshment.' The Sun and the Wind said, 'Thank not us; thank God who gave the Ocean, and the Sun, and the Wind, and caused the Drops to fall.' And then the Christianly instructed Flower lifted up its face and said, 'O God, I thank Thee who didst make the Ocean, and didst give the Sun its power to draw the Cloud from the Ocean, and didst give the Winds their wings to bring the Clouds hither, and didst drop Drops from the Clouds that brought me back my life.' God hides Himself. Let it be our joy to find Him in the manifestations of His love, and make all our gratitude to Nature, to nation, to father, to mother, to companion, to friend, thanksgiving to Him. So may we turn, in the alchemy of piety, all our joy to gratitude.[1]

[1] Sir John Lubbock, *The Use of Life*, 212.

## Sit Still.

Ruth iii. 18.—'Then said she, Sit still, my daughter.'

'Sit still, my daughter,' Naomi said, as the two lone women sat together, whilst the grey dawn broke over the sky. Each had her special thoughts, thoughts that tended to disquietude and restlessness. The elder was eager to find a home for the young life which had twined itself so tenaciously round her.

[1] Lyman Abbott.

The younger was filled with hope, and fear, and wonder, as she stood in the doorway, which seemed about to open into a garden of delight. It is not easy to sit still when young life is throbbing through our veins, and hope beckons us forward, and our natural impulse is to do something to secure the accomplishment of our plans.

At first, life in Bethlehem had meant for Naomi a rush of bitter memory, sad foreboding, bitter privation; but of late there had been a turn in the tide. Ruth's strong young arms, filled with the gleaner's sheaves, had beaten back hunger and want, had brought comfort and help to the aged heart of the mother for whom all pleasantness seemed to have passed, and whose eyes would wistfully turn at sunset to the long range of the hills of Moab, glowing in the slanting rays, because on their further side were the three graves in which her life lay buried. How natural that Naomi should strive to win rest, and home, and love for the one who was more to her than ten sons!

Boaz was known throughout the whole district as a man of honour, strong as he was considerate, fit to rule others because able to control himself, a man to whom a defenceless woman might entrust herself without the slightest fear of his taking undue advantage of her, one to whom the boys and youths of Bethlehem looked up as their model, and whose pure, simple, and beautiful life was the daily admiration and incentive of his fellow-townsmen. In former days, Naomi, in common with the rest of her people, had read him as we read a book, and was persuaded that he was a man of his word, one who could be relied on to see to the end any duty which he undertook. 'Sit still, my daughter,' she therefore said; 'for the man will not rest, until he have finished the thing this day.'

It is thus, and only thus, that we too can rest. Every year the stress and speed of life increase. Events, engagements, books, opinions flash past us, as the country seen through the windows of an express train. One impression has not time to fix itself on the inner eye before it is succeeded by another by which it is effaced. It is increasingly difficult to find time literally to sit down, and even if the physical attitude is assumed the mind is invaded by so many distracting thoughts and suggestions that it is almost impossible to sit *still*.

There is only one method by which this lost art can be regained. We must shelter ourselves in absolute faith behind Jesus Christ. These two solitary women were able to still each other and themselves by remembering that Boaz had their matter in hand, and that he was both able and eager to carry it through. They might sit still, because he would not sit still. They might rest, since he would not. Their cause was safe in his hands, and he would see it to the end, whatever it might be. Happy are we when we can thus hand over our many anxieties and burdens to the Lord, and be sure that He has assumed them, bears them in His heart, and will not rest until He has seen them safely to the end. 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Fret not thyself.'

As Ruth, obedient to her mother's will,
Lord, if Thou bid me, so will I be still.
Shew me the things that Thou wouldst have me do,
And to Thy holy wish I will be true.
Must I from active service now withdraw—
Then I shall rest and so fulfil Thy law.
Can I no more my praise with others join—
Then I'm content to sing Thy praise alone.

I will not yearn for aught Thou dost not give,
But only ask to love Thee while I live;
I will not seek to know what Thou withhold,
But only wish to trust Thee as of old;
If Thou but shew me step by step the way
I ask no more, but follow day by day;
Lord, let me shelter on Thy Holy breast,
I am Thy child, to Thee I leave the rest.[1]

## A Happy Ending.

Ruth iv. 16.—'And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.'

THIS short Book has a happy ending. Human love has here worked to pleasant issues, crooked

[1] E. Livingston, *Sabbath Thoughts*, 57.

things are made straight and rough places plain; and, though much has been sad as we read, all is bright at the last and we see of the travail of human souls and are satisfied. Throughout all Scripture the travail and sacrifice of the Divine love are shown to be working amidst the confusion and strife of Time; and at the end of the Bible these means are justified by a perfect end, of which it is written, 'There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.' God's Word, therefore, as a whole, acknowledges that He has heard the long sob of Time. It pledges Him to appease and to satisfy. He seems to be committing Himself hereafter to—

> introduce with melody a life,
> Which we can live, where there is no farewell,
> Nor any death.

1. As soon as the way was legally clear, Boaz married Ruth. From the court of the gate on the breast of the village hill he went up the village street with the deed of right to Ruth in his hand publicly witnessed and attested; and one might fancy that the waft of the fields and the voice of the brook assented to the curious usage of that open-air bargaining, and that the silent mountains stood that morning to confirm and guard the judgment of the village elders. Something truly sublime seems to invest a transaction carried through with such elemental simplicity and under the benediction of the shepherd-senators; and it is hard not to think that the hope of Israel's larger future must have stirred in his heart when, with these words ringing in his memory, 'The Lord make the woman that is come into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-lehem,' Boaz took home his bride. With this act of proud espousal the sweet plot of our sacred story works itself out, and the little idyll of ancient love and duty completes itself. And here in its completed beauty, we find it in the midst of the record of the world's most important events, a jewelled clasp that holds great history together. Till men stop reading the Bible they will not stop reading of Ruth and Boaz; till they forget Christ Jesus they will not forget how Boaz and Ruth loved and wed.

2. There is no dallying over these two lives after they have reached the goal to which the story all along was quietly pressing them. Their home-life is 'a garden inclosed,' and we may not enter where the Bible has shut. Doubtless its first weeks and months—the afterglow of those of gleam and shadow which preceded—were as one long gracious day, but of necessity surprise and strain would come as they two adjusted themselves to bearing evenly the daily burden and the not infrequent cross. Those hours in the field and by the threshing-floor, as autumn sloped to winter, were but a prelude played on muted strings; they were only the preliminaries to life—to real life. For life, wherever lived and however arranged, is a stern, sore business: it has entanglement and limitation; it involves sacrifice, and sweat of heart like beads of blood; its finest joys have their purchase-price of pain. But who does not know that thus the virtue and strength of true love are proved, and that in the crowding and conflict of life day after day, love's fullness and infinity are unfolded? If Boaz was not patient and chivalrous and considerate, and Ruth gentle and unselfish and sweet, ever and ever more as the years went on, then all that seemed at the first of finest gold had been only filigree and tinsel of basest alloy.

¶ Marriage, which has been the bourne of so many narratives, is still a great beginning, as it was to Adam and Eve, who kept their honeymoon in Eden, but had their first little one among the thorns and thistles of the wilderness. It is still the beginning of the home epic—the gradual conquest or irremediable loss of that complete union which makes the advancing years a climax, and age the harvest of sweet memories in common.

Some set out, like Crusaders of old, with a glorious equipment of hope and enthusiasm, and get broken by the way, wanting patience with each other and the world.[1]

[1] G. Eliot, *Middlemarch*.

¶ In this relation between husband and wife, it is the design of God to exhibit the most perfect union whereof two spirits living upon the earth are susceptible. He intended that there should be community between them in all things, individuality in none; that whenever they differ they should find a common ground on which to agree, and not separate and recede into their proper provinces of thought and feeling; but do their most diligent endeavour to be of one heart and of one soul. He meaneth it to be the perfection of communion, the masterpiece of affection, and the parent of all other associations—friendship, acquaintance, and society. And this, not for the sake of domestic happiness and prosperity alone, but for the sake of religion and spiritual blessedness. For in joining such a communion it is manifest that both parties must surrender their personality, and come forth from the magic circle of their self-love; that their natures must become interwoven, each resigning self for something better, which is not self, but communion, which is not a thing seen, but a thing unseen—something made from the union of the two, which hath no existence in either.[1]

3. Only one picture more are we allowed to have from the pen of the nameless artist who has given us so many, and whose eye is as keen for moral beauty in human lives as for Nature's under autumn skies. He has given us the open air and the wayside, with waif women for central interest; he has also given us village fields happy in the harvest, and the meek evening when everything goes home, and the day breaking eerily on timorous lovers; above all he has given us Ruth herself, whose veins are warm with a heaven-born love, who makes no haste in service, and tempers even the air around her to sweetness. Now he gives us an interior, and it is the cradle-room in Ruth's home, and Naomi is there with a babe in her arms. What gentle lines of finest effect there are within the narrow compass of this slender vignette of home-life! What delicate shading to bring out the new centre of interest and the new focus of love! What pathos and what joy there are in the scene! By all the people about, and by us still, the child of Ruth is seen inseparable from Naomi. The old heart grew young again; the hard old hands grew tender; the harsh old tongue grew soft—all under the spell of that little visitant from heaven. The old woman would not let anybody else have it; she took it and laid it in her bosom; she constituted herself mistress of all the ceremonies around it; she 'became nurse unto it.' The long, lean arms of the aged widow stretched around the soft little bundle of breathing life on her knee; the round chubby thing, white-swaddled, seen against the widow's weeds; the withered and wrinkled face bending over the sweet lamb-like face of the new-born—the only lovely thing in the long Jewish face of the woman being her dark Jewish eyes lighted with love at the countenance of the babe!—that was the picture in the house of Boaz which many went to see long ago; and it is a picture still.

¶ It is an exquisite picture in its homely simplicity, and its heart-touches that James Whitcomb Riley draws for us from the prayer of the London shopkeeper, and angler and author, Isaak Walton:

I crave, dear Lord,
No boundless hoard
Of gold and gear,
Nor jewels fine,
Nor lands, nor kine,
Nor treasure-heaps of anything—
Let but a little hut be mine
Where at the hearthstone I may hear
The cricket sing,
And have the shine
Of one glad woman's eyes to make,
For my poor sake,
Our simple home a place divine;—
Just the wee cot—the cricket's chirr—
Love and the smiling face of her.

I pray not for
Great riches, nor
For vast estates and castle-halls,—
Give me to hear the bare footfalls

[1] *Selections from the Collected Writings of Edward Irving*, 108.

Of children o'er
An oaken floor
New-rinsed with sunshine, or bespread
With but the tiny coverlet
And pillow for the baby's head;
And, pray Thou, may
The door stand open and the day
Send ever in a gentle breeze,
With fragrance from the locust-trees,
And drowsy moan of doves, and blur
Of robin-chirps, and drone of bees,
With after-hushes of the stir
Of intermingling sounds, and then
The goodwife and the smile of her
Filling the silence again—
The cricket's call
And the wee cot,
Dear Lord of all,
Deny me not!

I pray not that
Men tremble at
My power of place
And lordly sway,—
I only pray for simple grace
To look my neighbour in the face
Full honestly from day to day—
Yield me his horny palm to hold,
And I'll not pray
For gold;—
The tanned face, garlanded with mirth,
It hath the kingliest smile on earth;
The swart brow, diamonded with sweat,
Hath never need of coronet.
And so I reach,
Dear Lord, to Thee,
And do beseech
Thou givest me
The wee cot, and the cricket's chirr,
Love, and the glad sweet face of her!

# DEUTERONOMY

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## INDEX TO SERMONS

DEUT. I. 1.

*Expositor*, 3rd ser., ii 289 (S. R. Driver).

DEUT. I. 6.

Brown, C., *God and Man*, 75.
Morgan, G. C., *The True Estimate of Life*, 125.
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DEUT. I. 6, 7, 8.

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DEUT. I. 8.

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DEUT. I. 12.

Young, D. T., *The Unveiled Evangel*, 133.
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DEUT. I. 16, 17.

Adler, H., *Anglo-Jewish Memories*, 13.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xlvi. 379 (J. Adderley).
*Church of England Pulpit*, xxxix. 135 (J. Adderley).
*Homiletic Review*, xviii. 568.

DEUT. I. 19.

Chapman, J. W., *The Power of a Surrendered Life*, 109.
Tuttle, A. H., *Egypt to Canaan*, 259.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxvi. 107 (G. Pidgeon).

DEUT. I. 21.

Hopkins, E. H., in *Keswick Week*, 1907, p. 193.

DEUT. I. 22.

*Church Pulpit Year Book*, vi. 27.

DEUT. I. 25.

Spurgeon, C. H., *Twelve S. on Heaven*, No. 2607.

DEUT. I. 25, 26.

Banks, L. A., *On the Trail of Moses*, 221.

DEUT. I. 28.

Parker, J., *Studies in Texts*, ii. 194.
Wilson, S. L., *Helpful Words*, 341.

DEUT. I. 32.

Parker, J., *City Temple Pulpit*, ii. 42.

DEUT. I. 36.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 162.

DEUT. I. 38.

Wakerley, J. E., *The Making of Moral Manhood*, 64.

DEUT. I. 39.

Parker, J., *Studies in Texts*, i. 191.

DEUT. I. 40.

Parker, J., *Studies in Texts*, iii. 212.

DEUT. I. 44.

Snell, B. J., *Through Study Windows*, 55.

DEUT. II. 3.

Glasse, J., *Times and Seasons*, 220.
Williams, J. L., in *S. by Welshmen in English Pulpits*, 48.

DEUT. II. 5.

Parker, J., *Studies in Texts*, iv. 170.

DEUT. II. 7.

Davidson, J. T., *A Good Start*, 61.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 163.
Morrow, H. W., *Under the Shadow of God*, 128.
Raleigh, A., *Thoughts for the Weary*, 46.
Wilson, S. L., *Helpful Words*, 8.
*Christian World Pulpit*, ix. 17 (J. Kennedy).

DEUT. II. 9.

Parker, J. *Studies in Texts*, iv. 170.

DEUT. II. 20.

*Christian World Pulpit*, c. 87 (F. J. Miles).

DEUT. II. 31.

Morrison, G. H., *The Gentle Art of Making Happy*, 41.

DEUT. II. 36.

Parker, J., *Studies in Texts*, i. 183.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xliv. 164 (A. E. Butler).

DEUT. III. 11.

*Expository Times*, xvi. 472 (F. Hommel).

DEUT. III. 22.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 164.

DEUT. III. 23-27.

Cox, S., *Expositions*, iii. 181.

DEUT. III. 23-28.

*Christian World Pulpit*, l. 90 (J. Denney).

DEUT. III. 25.

Brown, J. B., *The Soul's Exodus*, 361.
Jerdan C., *The One Saving Name*, 246.
Parker, J., *Studies in Texts*, iii. 189.
Stuart, K. M., *Light from the Holy Hills*, 99.

DEUT. III. 25-27.

Robinson, J. W., *Sunlit Hopes*, 75.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xliii. 74 (Professor Graham).

DEUT. III. 26.

Parker, J., *The City Temple Pulpit*, iii. 40.

DEUT. III. 27.

Shepherd, A., *Bible Studies in Living Subjects*, 159.
— *Memoir and S.*, 169.

DEUT. III. 27, 28.

Talbot, E., *Leeds Parish Church S.*, 159.

DEUT. III. 29.

Parker, J., *Studies in Texts*, vi. 48.

DEUT. IV. 1.

Pierce, C. C., *The Hunger of the Heart for Faith*, 46.

DEUT. IV. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8.

W., A. H., *If ye Fulfil the Royal Law*, 65.

DEUT. IV. 5, 6.

Matheson, G., *Thoughts for Life's Journey*, 120.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xxxv. 409 (Dr. Bradley).
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DEUT. IV. 5-8.

Hughes, H. P., *Social Christianity*, 135.

DEUT. IV. 5-13.

Jowett, J. H., *My Daily Meditation*, 47.

DEUT. IV. 6.

Farrar, F. W., *S. and Addresses delivered in America*, 219.
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DEUT. IV. 7.

Cheyne, P., *The Most Holy Eucharist*, 16.
Dawson, J., *Christ and the Sword*, 72.
Neale, J. M., *S. on the Blessed Sacrament*, 18.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* 4th Sunday after Easter, viii. 167.

DEUT. IV. 7, 8.

*Churchman's Pulpit:* 4th Sunday after Easter, viii. 163 (G. T. S. Farquhar).

DEUT. IV. 7-9.

Smith, N., *Members One of Another*, 49.

DEUT. IV. 9.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 165.
Newton, J., *The Problem of Personality*, 199.

*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, i. 272.
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DEUT. IV. 9, 10.

Jones, W. B., *The Peace of God*, 216.
Maurice, F. D., *Christmas Day*, 114.

DEUT. IV. 10.

Wills, J., *The Challenge of the Cross*, 121.

DEUT. IV. 12.

*Church Pulpit Year Book*, xiii. 115.

DEUT. IV. 12, 13.

Tuttle, A. H., *Egypt to Canaan*, 195.

DEUT. IV. 12-14.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xxvii. 332 (H. Jones).

DEUT. IV. 13.

Lockyer, T. F., *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, 19.

DEUT. IV. 21.

*Church Pulpit Year Book*, vi. 125.

DEUT. IV. 21, 22.

Trench, R. C., *S. New and Old*, 152.
— *S. in Ireland*, 238.
Winterbotham, R., *Sermons*, 450.

DEUT. IV. 22.

Vaughan, C. J., *Family Prayer and S. Book*, i. 560.
— *The Presence of God*, 168.

DEUT. IV. 23.

Hopkins, E. H., *The Law of Liberty*, 163.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xli. 129 (F. W. Farrar).
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DEUT. IV. 24.

Westcott, B. F., *The Historic Faith*, 31.
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DEUT. IV. 25.

Horton, R. F., *The Conquered World*, 84.

DEUT. IV. 29.

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DEUT. IV. 31.

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DEUT. IV. 32.

Jowett, J. H., *The Eagle Life*, 22.
Shepard, J. W., *Light and Life*, 49.
Thorne, H., *Notable Sayings*, 169.
Whitworth, W. A., *Worship in the Christian Church*, 125.
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DEUT. IV. 39.

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Parker, J., *The City Temple*, v. 13.
Soden, J. J., *S. on Social Subjects*, 101.
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DEUT. IV. 39, 40.

Kingsley, C., *Gospel of the Pentateuch and David*, 197.

DEUT. IV. 41-43.

Clifton, E. J., *Bible Illustrations*, 117.

DEUT. IV. 43.

Armitage, W. J., *The Cities of Refuge*, 81.

DEUT. V. 1-22.

Hathaway, E. P., *The Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer*, 23.

DEUT. V. 2.

Black, H., *Christ's Service of Love*, 292.

DEUT. V. 2, 3, 22.

Robinson, S., *Discourses of Redemption*, 121.

DEUT. V. 3, 4.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lxvi. 205 (T. Yates).

DEUT. V. 4, 5.

W., A. H., *If ye Fulfil the Royal Law*, 32.

DEUT. V. 5.

Simpson, W. J. S., *Reconciliation between God and Man*, 105.

DEUT. V. 6.

*Churchman's Pulpit:* 4th Sunday after Easter, viii. 177 (W. Knight).

DEUT. V. 6, 7.

Black, H., *Christ's Service of Love*, 304.
Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 21.
Gore, C., *Christian Moral Principles*, 14.

DEUT. V. 8-10.

Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 55.

DEUT. V. 9, 10.

*Jewish Chronicle*, Aug. 15, 1913.

DEUT. V. 11.

Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 73.

DEUT. V. 12-15.

Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 89.
Lee, R., *Sermons*, 399, 411.

DEUT. V. 12-18.

Fuller, M., *The Lord's Day*, 67.

DEUT. V. 15.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 166.
Hutton, J. A., *The Way of Remembrance*, 11.
Rowland, A., *Open Windows*, 20.
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Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 107.

DEUT. V. 17.

Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 125.

DEUT. V. 18.

Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 141.

DEUT. V. 19.

Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 157.

DEUT. V. 20.

Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 173.

DEUT. V. 21.

Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 191.

DEUT. V. 22.

Dykes, J. O., *The Law of the Ten Words*, 3.

DEUT. V. 27.

Ainsworth, P. C., *The Pilgrim Church*, 117.

DEUT. V. 28, 29.

*Churchman's Pulpit:* 4th Sunday after Easter, viii. 180.

DEUT. V. 29.

Moody, D. L., *New S., Addresses and Prayers*, 395.

DEUT. V. 31.

Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Easter to Ascension Day, 182.

DEUT. VI. 1, 2.

*Christian World Pulpit*, liii. 382 (F. W. Macdonald).

DEUT. VI. 4.

Horne, C. S., in *S. and Addresses*, 197, 211.
Jowett, B., *S. on Faith and Doctrine*, 57.
Macgregor, G. H. C., *Messages of the O.T.*, 59.
Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence*, 265.
Wilkinson, G. H., *The Heavenly Vision*, 179.

DEUT. VI. 4, 5.

Vaughan, J., *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), xii. No. 897.
*Church of England Pulpit*, xxxvii. 292 (J. Silvester).
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DEUT. VI. 4, 5, VII. 9.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xxxi. 165 (E. White).

DEUT. VI. 5.

Berry, S. M., *The Crucible of Experience*, 260.
Sclater, J. R. P., *The Enterprise of Life*, 193.
Vaughan, C. J., *The Presence of God*, 188.
— *Family Prayer and S. Book*, i. 568.
*Church Pulpit Year Book*, xiii. 119.

DEUT. VI. 5-7.

Sunn, J., *In Touch with God*, 44.

DEUT. VI. 6.

Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence*, 202.

DEUT. VI. 6, 7.

*Churchman's Pulpit:* 5th Sunday after Easter, viii. 241 (J. Hicks).
*Homiletic Review*, lxxxi. 492 (E. L. Jones).

DEUT. VI. 6-8.

Williams, T. M., *S. of the Age*, 155.

DEUT. VI. 7.

Jowett, J. H., *The Eagle Life*, 26.
*Church of England Pulpit*, lxi. 606 (A. P. Loxley).
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DEUT. VI. 7-9.

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DEUT. VI. 11, 12.

Jowett, J. H., *The Eagle Life*, 29.

DEUT. VI. 12.

Darlow, T. H., *The Upward Calling*, 70.
Lennard, V. R., *The Church's Message*, i. 213.
Millard, F. L. H., *Res Invictae*, 205.
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DEUT. VI. 16.

Newman, C. E., *The Bible in the Pulpit*, 120.

DEUT. VI. 18.

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DEUT. VI. 23.

Clark, H. W., *The Laws of the Inner Kingdom,* 139.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 167.
Parker, J., *Studies in Texts,* ii. 3.
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DEUT. VI. 24.

Brown, J. B., *The Soul's Exodus,* 202.

DEUT. VII. 2.

Parker, J., *Studies in Texts,* iii. 207.

DEUT. VII. 2ff.

Cox, S., *The Book of Ruth,* 53.

DEUT. VII. 2-4.

Arnold, T., *Sermons,* vi. 24.

DEUT. VII. 6.

Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Easter to Ascension Day, 192.

DEUT. VII. 7.

Jerdan, C., *Manna for Young Pilgrims,* 355.
*Christian World Pulpit,* lxxviii. 147 (C. Jerdan).

DEUT. VII. 7, 8.

Simpson, H. L., *The Intention of His Soul,* 191.

DEUT. VII. 9.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 1.
Parker, J., *The City Temple Pulpit,* iv. 78.
— *Studies in Texts,* iii. 211.
Shepherd, A., *Men in the Making,* 247.
— *The Responsibility of God,* 5.

DEUT. VII. 9, 10.

Rawnsley, R. D. B., *Village S.,* ii. 19.

DEUT. VII. 12, 13.

Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Easter to Ascension Day, 375.

DEUT. VII. 18.

Hutton, J. A., *The Way of Remembrance,* 22.
*Record of Christian Work,* 1914, p. 822 (J. A. Hutton).

DEUT. VII. 20.

MacArthur, R. S., *Quick Truths,* ii. 23.

DEUT. VII. 21.

Maurice, F. D., *Lincoln's Inn S.,* vi. 123.

DEUT. VII. 22.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 168.
Vince, C., *The Unchanging Saviour,* 292.
*Children's Great Texts of the Bible* i. 277.

DEUT. VII. 22-26.

Maurice, F. D., *Patriarchs and Lawgivers,* 256.

DEUT. VII. 25.

Morrison, G. H., *The Wind on the Heath,* 209.

DEUT. VIII. 1, 2, 3, 5.

Kingsley, C., *True Words for Brave Men,* 36.

DEUT. VIII. 1-10.

Jowett, J. H., *My Daily Meditation,* 59.

DEUT. VIII. 2.

Austin, G. B., *The Beauty of Goodness,* 206.
Brown, J. B., *The Soul's Exodus,* 306.
Dudden, F. H., *The Delayed Victory,* 103.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 169.
Jones, J. S., *The Invisible Things,* 51.
Knight, G. H., *Abiding Help,* 59.
Maclaren, A., *A Year's Ministry,* i. 151.
— *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 4.
Morrison, G. H., *Flood-Tide,* 179.
Pearse, M. G., *Parables and Pictures,* 201.
Shillito, E., *The New Days,* 26.
Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence,* 367.
Taylor, J., *Cameos of Comfort,* 85.
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DEUT. VIII. 2, 3.

Body, G., *The Life of Temptation,* 78.

Harford-Battersby, T. D., *Christ the First*, 215.
Jordan, W. G., *The Challenge of the Book*, 72.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxii. 296 (G. C. Morgan).

DEUT. VIII. 3.

Joseph, M., *The Ideal in Judaism*, 101.
Jowett, J. H., *The Eagle Life*, 31.
Kelman, J., *Salted with Fire*, 1.
Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 1.
Muir, J., *War and Christian Duty*, 57.
Newman, C. E., *The Bible in the Pulpit*, 108.
Shore, T. T., *Life of the World to Come*, 39.
Tuttle, A. H., *Egypt to Canaan*, 138.
Walker, J. W., in *A Book of Lay S.*, 133.
Waterston, R., *Thoughts on the Lord's Supper*, 12.
Westcott, B. F., *Village S.*, 353.
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DEUT. VIII. 7-9.

Dykes, J. O., *Abraham*, 45.

DEUT. VIII. 7-10.

Thring, E., *Uppingham S.*, ii. 352.

DEUT. VIII. 8.

Davies, D., *Talks*, vi. 93.

DEUT. VIII. 10.

Parkhurst, C. H., *The Pattern in the Mount*, 135.
*Expository Times*, vi. 516 (R. C. Ford).

DEUT. VIII. 10, 11.

Sowter, G. A., *Sowing and Reaping*, 84.

DEUT. VIII. 11.

Gibbon, J. M., *The Image of God*, 145.
Hunter, J., *De Profundis Clamavi*, 256.
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DEUT. VIII. 11-15.

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DEUT. VIII. 11-18.

Knight, G. H., *Abiding Help*, 19.

DEUT. VIII. 11-20.

Jowett, J. H., *My Daily Meditation*, 14.

DEUT. VIII. 15.

Neale, J. M., *Sackville College Chapel S.*, ii. 336.

DEUT. VIII. 15, 16.

Vaughan, D. J., *Questions of the Day*, 1.

DEUT. VIII. 18.

Dixon, A. C., *The Christian Character*, 57.
Green, A. V., *Australian S.*, 205.
Parker, J., *Hidden Springs*, 254.
Leach, C., *S. to Working-Men*, 264.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Harvest Thanksgiving, xxii. 21 (R. H. Clutterbuck).

DEUT. VIII. 19.

Butler, W. J., *S. for Working Men*, 256.

DEUT. IX. 1.

Arnold, T., *Sermons*, v. 305.
Jerdan, C., *For the Lambs of the Flock*, 227.

DEUT. IX. 1, 3.

*Church Pulpit Year Book*, iv. 108.

DEUT. IX. 2.

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DEUT. IX. 3.

Adams, J., *S. in Syntax*, 6.

DEUT. IX. 5.

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DEUT. IX. 6.

Goodwin, H., *Parish S.*, v. 78.

DEUT. IX. 7-21.

Pearse, M. G., *Moses*, 207.
*Preacher's Magazine*, 1893, p. 495 (M. G. Pearse).

DEUT. IX. 19.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 170.

DEUT. IX. 22.

Pigou, F., *Faith and Practice*, 132.

DEUT. IX. 26-29.

Maurice, F. D., *Lincoln's Inn S.*, ii. 46.

DEUT. IX. 29.

Lightfoot, J. B., *S.* (*Contemporary Pulpit Library*), i. 29.
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DEUT. X. 1.

Robinson, S., *Discourses of Redemption*, 119.

DEUT. X. 2.

Matheson, G., *Thoughts for Life's Journey*, 82.

DEUT. X. 11.

Burrell, D. J., *The Unaccountable Man*, 273.

DEUT. X. 12.

Darlow, T. H., *The Upward Calling*, 220.
Whiton, J. M., *Reconsiderations*, 1.

DEUT. X. 12, 13.

Davies, T., *Sermons*, ii. 246.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Circumcision of Christ, etc., iii. 88 (W. W. How).

DEUT. X. 14, 15.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxvi. 35 (C. H. Dod).

DEUT. X. 16.

Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Christmas and Epiphany, 193.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lv. 1 (M. Creighton).

DEUT. X. 19.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 171.
Jerdan, C., *For the Lambs of the Flock*, 272.
Skrine, J. H., *A Goodly Heritage*, 10.
*Church Pulpit Year Book*, ix. 99.

DEUT. X. 20.

Newman, C. E., *The Bible in the Pulpit*, 130.

DEUT. XI. 10-12.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lxviii. 236 (G. W. Wall).

DEUT. XI. 10-15.

Tuttle, A. H., *Egypt to Canaan*, 31.

DEUT. XI. 11.

Davies, D., *Talks*, iv. 557.
Morrison, G. H., *Flood-Tide*, 126.
Pearse, M. G., *Parables and Pictures*, 212.
Simpson, H. L., *The Intention of His Soul*, 221.

DEUT. XI. 11, 12.

Bamford, A. J., *Things that are Made*, 141.
Manuel, D. G., *A Gladdening River*, 34.
Pearse, M. G., *The Gospel for the Day*, 1.
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DEUT. XI. 12.

Burton, H., *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 253.
Dykes, J. O., *Abraham*, 45.

DEUT. XI. 12-14.

Peabody, F. G., *Mornings in the College Chapel*, ii. 166.

DEUT. XI. 18.

*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, i. 284.

DEUT. XI. 18-20.

*20th Century Pastor*, xxxii. 117.

DEUT. XI. 18-21.

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DEUT. XI. 18-25.

Jowett, J. H., *My Daily Meditation*, 129.

DEUT. XI. 19.

Lucas, H., *At the Parting of the Ways*, 150.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lviii. 116 (G. W. Allen).

DEUT. XI. 19, 20.

Greenhough, J. G., *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, 141.

DEUT. XI. 21.

Black, H., *According to My Gospel*, 227.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 172.
Stalberg, I. O., *The Lamp of Friendship*, 38.

DEUT. XI. 22-24.

Burrell, D. J., *God and the People*, 85.

DEUT. XI. 26-28.

Buxton, H. J. W., *The Battle of Life*, 195.
Webb-Peploe, H. W., *The Victorious Life*, 152.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxx. 375 (J. L. Rodges).

DEUT. XI. 26-29.

Huntington, F. D., *Christ in the Christian Year:* Trinity to Advent, 132.

DEUT. XII. 2, 3.

Hutton, J. A., *Our Only Safeguard*, 27.

DEUT. XII. 8, 9.

Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday, 53.

DEUT. XII. 13.

Dawson, W. J., *The Evangelistic Note*, 251.
Robinson, J. W., *Sunlit Hopes*, 35.

DEUT. XII. 13, 14.

*Christian World Pulpit*, ci. 110 (G. B. Austin).

DEUT. XII. 18.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 15.

DEUT. XII. 19.

Wakinshaw, W., *The Vow of Ruth*, 187.

DEUT. XII. 21.

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DEUT. XII. 23.

Jerdan, C., *Gospel Milk and Honey*, 25.

DEUT. XII. 32.

Butler, G., *Cheltenham College S.*, 356.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 173.

DEUT. XIII. 1-3.

Maurice, F. D., *Patriarchs and Lawgivers*, 274.

DEUT. XIII. 1-4.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lii. 179 (W. E. Barton).
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DEUT. XIII. 1, 2, 3, 5.

Thring, E., *Uppingham S.*, i. 110.

DEUT. XIII. 4.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Genesis, 32.

DEUT. XIII. 6, 8, 9.

*Church of England Pulpit*, li. 193 (G. Henslow).

DEUT. XIII. 8.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 174.

DEUT. XIII. 11.

Neale, J. M., *Sackville College Chapel S.*, iv. 29.

DEUT. XIII. 12-16.

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DEUT. XIV. 1.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 175.

DEUT. XIV. 2.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xlv. 12 (L. Abbott).

DEUT. XIV. 19.

Gregg, D., *Our Best Moods*, 313.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxi. 234 (D. Gregg).

DEUT. XIV. 21.

Horton, R. F., *The Hidden God*, 65.
Vaughan, C. J., *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, 140.

DEUT. XV. 4, 11.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xxviii. 392 (C. T. Price).

DEUT. XV. 7.

McIlveen, J., *Christ and the Christian Life*, 137.

DEUT. XV. 7, 8.

Punshon, W. M., *Lectures and S.*, 309.
— *Sermons*, ii. 25.

DEUT. XV. 9.

Oosterzee, J. J. van, *The Year of Salvation*, ii. 512.

DEUT. XV. 10.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 176.

DEUT. XV. 11.

Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Miscellaneous, 41.
Neale, J. M., *S. on Passages from the Prophets*, ii. 218.
Pigou, F., in *Religion in Common Life*, 41.
Punshon, W. M., *Lectures and S.*, 309.
— *Sermons*, ii. 25.
Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence*, 13.

DEUT. XV. 20.

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DEUT. XVI. 1.

Robinson, C. S., *Simon Peter*, 53.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xxv. 120 (E. White).

DEUT. XVI. 3.

Hutton, J. A., *The Way of Remembrance*, 43.
Smellie, A., *Out of the Desert a Gift*, 86.
*Record of Christian Work*, xxxiv. 88 (J. A. Hutton).

DEUT. XVI. 7.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 177.

DEUT. XVI. 9.

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DEUT. XVI. 9-12.

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DEUT. XVI. 12.

*Church Pulpit Year Book*, xiii. 127.

DEUT. XVI. 13.

Townsend, J. W., in *God's Garden*, 91.
Vaughan, C. J., *Plain Words on Christian Living*, 234.
— *The Family Prayer and S. Book*, ii. 362.
Williams, R., in *Thanksgiving S. and Outlines*, 113.

DEUT. XVI. 14.

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DEUT. XVI. 16, 17.

Adler, H., *Anglo-Jewish Memories*, 196.
Brown, J. B., *The Sunday Afternoon*, 71.

Peters, J. P., *Modern Christianity*, 153.
Thring, E., *Uppingham S.*, ii. 340, 346.

DEUT. XVI. 18-20.

Hyamson, M., *The Oral Law*, 126.

DEUT. XVI. 20.

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DEUT. XVI. 21.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xcvi. 212 (R. Evans).

DEUT. XVII. 1.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 178.

DEUT. XVII. 15.

Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place*, 194.

DEUT. XVII. 16.

Batchelor, H., *The Incarnation of God*, 175.
Laidlaw, J., *Studies in the Parables*, 219.
Robinson, C. S., *S. on Neglected Texts*, 215.
Taylor, W. M., *Contrary Winds*, 93.

DEUT. XVIII. 9-19.

*Congregationalist*, 1872, p. 161 (E. White).

DEUT. XVIII. 9-22.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 17.

DEUT. XVIII. 13.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 179
Oosterzee, J. J. van, *The Year of Salvation*, ii. 403.

DEUT. XVIII. 15.

Gibson, E. C. S., *The O.T. and its Messages*, 36.
Gifford, E. H., *Voices of the Prophets*, 153.
Holland, C., *Gleanings from a Ministry*, 21.
Macgregor, W. M., *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, 39.
Smellie, A., *Out of the Desert a Gift*, 175.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* 5th Sunday in Lent, vi. 224 (J. H. Newman); St. Bartholomew, etc., xv. 102 (W. M. Macgregor).
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DEUT. XVIII. 15-19.

Mauro, P., *God's Apostle and High Priest*, 33.

DEUT. XVIII. 15-22.

Randolph, B. W., *Christ in the O.T.*, 47.

DEUT. XVIII. 21.

Carmichael, F. F., *S. on Different Subjects*, 79.

DEUT. XVIII. 22.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lii. 179 (W. E. Barton).
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DEUT. XIX. 5.

*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, i. 288.

DEUT. XIX. 14.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 180.
*Preacher's Magazine*, xxvi. (1915) 246 (H. J. Pickett).

DEUT. XX. 1.

Almond, H. H., *Christ the Protestant*, 196.
— *S. by a Lay Headmaster*, i. 209.

DEUT. XX. 1-4.

Morrow, H. W., *War and Immortality*, 169.

DEUT. XX. 3.

Whitelaw, T., *Jehovah-Jesus*, 67.

DEUT. XX. 5, 7, 8.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 181.

DEUT. XX. 8.

Jowett, J. H., *The Eagle Life*, 33.
*Record*, Jan. 26, 1912 (G. F. Irwin).

DEUT. XX. 16.

Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 2.

DEUT. XX. 19.

Parker, J., *The City Temple*, iii. 118.

DEUT. XX. 19, 20.

Burrell, D. J., *Christ and Progress*, 43.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxvii. 285 (R. Mackintosh).

DEUT. XXI. 18-21.

Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments*, 253.

DEUT. XXI. 23.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 182.

DEUT. XXII. 6, 7.

Burrell, D. J., *The Morning Cometh*, 227.
— *A Quiver of Arrows*, 238.
Cox, S., *The Bird's Nest*, 1.
Gibbon, J. M., *The Children's Year*, 86.
— *The Pulpit*, 107.
Horton, R. F., *The Hidden God*, 65.
Hutton, J. A., *Our Only Safeguard*, 26.
Parker, J., *The City Temple*, iii. 127.
*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, i. 292.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* S. to the Young, xvi. 251 (S. Cox).
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DEUT. XXII. 8.

Brindley, R. B., *The Darkness Where God Is*, 120.

Davies, D., *Talks*, i. 242.
MacArthur, R. S., *Divine Balustrades*, 9, 23.
Parker, J., *The City Temple*, iii. 130.
*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, i. 297.
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DEUT. XXII. 9.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 183.
Macleod, A., *A Man's Gift*, 98.

DEUT. XXIII. 5.

Paterson, W. P., *In the Day of the Muster*, 24.
*Christian World Pulpit*, li. 153 (B. J. Snell).

DEUT. XXIII. 7.

Gollancz, H., *S. and Addresses*, i. 247.

DEUT. XXIII. 9.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 184.
Jowett, J. H., *The Eagle Life*, 37.
*Record*, Nov. 20, 1914 (C. E. Wilson).

DEUT. XXIII. 14.

Spurgeon, C. H., *Twelve S. on Christian Warfare*, No. 2177.

DEUT. XXIII. 15.

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DEUT. XXIII. 24.

*Expository Times*, iii. 527.

DEUT. XXIV. 14, 15.

Leach, C., *Sunday Afternoons with Working Men*, 305.

DEUT. XXIV. 18.

Boreham, F. W., *A Bunch of Everlastings*, 220.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 185.

DEUT. XXIV. 19.

Llewellyn, D. J., *The Forgotten Sheaf*, 1.
Morrison, G. H., in *Jesus in the Cornfield*, 95.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Harvest Thanksgiving, xxii. 23 (G. H. Morrison).

DEUT. XXV. 4.

Horton, R. F., *The Hidden God*, 65.
*Church of England Pulpit*, xlvii. 220 (Preb. Moss).

DEUT. XXV. 13.

*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, i. 302.

DEUT. XXV. 13-16.

Rowland, A., *The Exchanged Crowns*, 123.

DEUT. XXV. 14.

Butcher, C. H., *S. preached in the East*, 172.

DEUT. XXV. 16.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 186.

DEUT. XXV. 17.

Gollancz, H., *S. and Addresses*, ii. 106, 207.
Hutton, J. A., *The Way of Remembrance*, 31.

DEUT. XXVI. 5.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxix. 236 (T. Yates).

DEUT. XXVI. 7.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xliv. 180 (A. Connell).

DEUT. XXVI. 10.

Darlow, T. H., *The Upward Calling*, 80.
Robarts, F. H., *Sunday Morning Talks*, 169.
*By the Power of the Spirit*, 61.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Harvest Thanksgiving, xxii. 25 (C. A. Molony).
*Literary Churchman*, 1890, p. 337 (S. Hobson).

DEUT. XXVI. 11.

Thew, J., in *Jesus in the Cornfield*, 233.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Harvest Thanksgiving, xxii. 29 (J. Thew).

DEUT. XXVI. 17, 18.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 187.

DEUT. XXVI. 18, 19.

Knight, G. H., *Full Allegiance*, 13.

DEUT. XXVI. 19.

*Churchman*, xxvii. (1913) 673 (R. Jones).

DEUT. XXVII.

Moore, A., *God is Love*, 28.

DEUT. XXVII. 1-8.

Gollancz, H., *S. and Addresses*, i. 176.

DEUT. XXVII. 16.

Smith, W. M., *Giving a Man Another Chance*, 69.

DEUT. XXVII. 16, 17, 18, etc.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 188.

DEUT. XXVII. 17.

*New York Treasury*, xx. 415 (J. G. Meengs).

DEUT. XXVII. 17, 19.

Holland, H. S., in *Lombard Street in Lent*, 1.

DEUT. XXVIII. 1.

Farrar, F. W., *Ephphatha*, 289.

DEUT. XXVIII. 2.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 189.

DEUT. XXVIII. 3.

Singer, S., *S. and Memoir*, 257.
Wilson, S. L., *Helpful Words*, 54.

DEUT. XXVIII. 6.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xxviii. 168 (J. P. Gledstone).

DEUT. XXVIII. 6-13.

Gollancz, H., *S. and Addresses*, i. 510.

DEUT. XXVIII. 9.

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DEUT. XXVIII. 12.

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DEUT. XXVIII. 13.

Howatt, J. R., *The Children's Pulpit*, 112.
Jerdan, C., *Messages to the Children*, 234.

DEUT. XXVIII. 15.

Kingsley, C., *Village, Town and Country S.*, 262.

DEUT. XXVIII. 47, 48.

Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Lent to Passion-tide, 150.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 22.

DEUT. XXVIII. 58.

Wills, J., *The Challenge of the Cross*, 121.

DEUT. XXVIII. 65.

Jerdan, C., *For the Lambs of the Flock*, 79.

DEUT. XXVIII. 67.

Arnold, T., *Sermons*, vi. 32.
Parker, J., *The City Temple*, v. 194.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxiv. 1 (R. J. Campbell).

DEUT. XXIX. 10.

Farrar, F. W., *In the Days of Thy Youth*, 1.
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DEUT. XXIX. 10, 11.

Gollancz, H., *S. and Addresses*, i. 416.

DEUT. XXIX. 18.

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DEUT. XXIX. 29.

Black, J., *The Burthen of the Weeks*, 14.
Burrell, D. J., *The Spirit of the Age*, 42.
Davies, J. O., in *S. by Welshmen in English Pulpits*, 59.
Denney, J., *The Way Everlasting*, 26.
Dyke, H. van, *Manhood, Faith and Courage*, 213.
Hitchcock, R. D., *Eternal Atonement*, 55.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 190.
Holland, C., *Gleanings from a Ministry*, 150.
Karney, G., *Church Questions*, 71.
Parker, J., *The City Temple*, v. 325.
— *Hidden Springs*, 172.
Roberts, W. P., *Liberalism in Religion*, 28, 38.
Thornton, S., in *Report of Church Congress*, 1896, p. 20.
Webb-Peploe, H. W., *The Victorious Life*, 37.
*Christian Commonwealth*, xxxii. (1912) 469 (R. J. Campbell).
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*Expository Times*, xx. 27.
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DEUT. XXX. 11-14.

Cox. S., *Expositions*, ii. 350.
Macnutt, F. B., *The Inevitable Christ*, 168.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lii. 265 (L. Abbott).
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Sunday after Ascension Day, ix. 1 (G. Forbes).

DEUT. XXX. 11-20.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 24.

DEUT. XXX. 13.

Maurer, O. E., *The Brotherhood of the Burning Heart*, 35.

DEUT. XXX. 14.

Balmforth, R., *The N.T., in the Light of the Higher Criticism*, 261.
Craigie, J. A., *The Country Pulpit*, 40.
Davies, J. L., *The Work of Christ*, 239.
Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence*, 137.
Vaughan, C. J., *The Presence of God*, 209.
— *The Family Prayer and S. Book*, i. 639.
*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, i. 306.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Sunday after Ascension Day, ix. 3 (J. L. Davies).
*Church Pulpit Year Book*, vii. 104; xiii. 124.

DEUT. XXX. 15

Keymer, E. H., *The Everlasting Gospel*, 75.

DEUT. XXX. 15, 19.

Butler, H. M., *Belief in Christ*, 112.
Smith, N., *Members One of Another*, 25.

DEUT. XXX. 15-20.

*Jewish Chronicle*, Sept. 25, 1914.

DEUT. XXX. 19.

Chapman, J. W., *And Judas Iscariot*, 79.
Davies, T., *Philippians*, 532.
Freeston, F. K., in *The Verities of Religion*, 125.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 191.
Mills, B. F., *God's World*, 271.
Selby, T. G., *The God of the Patriarchs*, 273.
Vaughan, J., *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), xv. (1877) No. 1049.
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*Expository Times*, xx. 59.

DEUT. XXX. 19, 20.

Conwell, R. H., *S. for the Great Days of the Year*, 144.
Kingsley, C., *The Good News of God*, 67.
— *Westminster S.*, 271.

DEUT. XXX. 20.

*Christian Commonwealth*, xxxii. (1912) 421 (R. J. Campbell).

DEUT. XXXI. 1, 2.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxviii. 173 (H. W. Morrow).

DEUT. XXXI. 2.

Faithfull, R. C., *My Place in the World*, 60.
Meyer, F. B., *Moses*, 180.
Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence*, 111.

DEUT. XXXI. 6.

B., B. T., *God's Book of Hope*, 84.
Brastow, L. O., in *The Culture of Christian Manhood*, 164.
*Literary Churchman*, 1882, p. 540 (W. E. Coghlan).

DEUT. XXXI. 6, 7, 23.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lviii. 74 (T. Parry).

DEUT. XXXI. 7, 8.

Paget, F., *The Redemption of War*, 26.
Woods, H. G., *Christianity and War*, 28.
*Christian World Pulpit*, iii. 195 (W. Landels).

DEUT. XXXI. 7-13.

Jowett, J. H., *My Daily Meditation*, 303.

DEUT. XXXI. 8.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 192.
Morrison, G. H., *The Weaving of Glory*, 36.
Smith, D., *Christian Counsel*, 135.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xxix. 55 (A. D. Spong).

DEUT. XXXI. 13.

Martin, S., *Rain Upon the Mown Grass*, 476.

DEUT. XXXI. 14.

Paget, F. E., *Helps and Hindrances*, i. 44.

DEUT. XXXI. 17.

Smith, W. S., *How One Church Went Through a War*, 115.

DEUT. XXXI. 20.

*Christian Age*, xlii. 98 (J. W. A. Stewart).

DEUT. XXXI. 23.

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DEUT. XXXI. 25, 26.

*Expositor and Current Anecdotes*, xix. (1917-18) 553 (D. J. Burrell).

DEUT. XXXII. 2.

Macmillan, H., *The Daisies of Nazareth*, 37.

DEUT. XXXII. 4.

Maclaren, A., *Creed and Conduct*, 275.
Walker, W. L., *The True Christ*, 9.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xliv. 81 (W. Sinclair).
*Church of England Pulpit*, xxxvi. 109 (W. Sinclair).

DEUT. XXXII. 5.

Howatt, J. R., *A Year's Addresses to the Young*, 154.
Sage, W. C., *S. preached in the Villages*, 136.

DEUT. XXXII. 7.

Banks, L. A., *On the Trail of Moses*, 230.
Hatch, E., *Memorials*, 311.
Pearson, A., *The Claims of the Faith*, 178.
Wilson, M. C., *Soldier's Fare*, 65.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lv. 3 (G. G. Bradley); lix. 4 (G. G. Bradley).
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DEUT. XXXII. 8.

Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 208.
*Homiletic Review*, xxxiv. 317 (E. F. Burr).

DEUT. XXXII. 8, 9.

Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 173.

DEUT. XXXII. 9.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 29.
— *A Year's Ministry*, i. 221.
Matheson, G., *Thoughts for Life's Journey*, 117.
Morrow, H. W., *Under the Shadow of God*, 212.
Spurgeon, C. H., *Able to the Uttermost*, 92.

DEUT. XXXII. 10.

Adams, J., *S. in Syntax*, 69.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 193.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxvi. 374 (W. Lee); ciii. 241 (A. D. Martin).

DEUT. XXXII. 11.

Archibald, A. W., *Biblical Nature Studies*, 171.
Cuyler, T. L., *Stirring the Eagle's Nest*, 3.
Maclaren, A., *Triumphant Certainties*, 41.
— *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc. 40.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xxxvi. 8 (T. L. Cuyler); xcvi. 27 (E. J. Jones).
*Expository Times*, xxvi. 101.

DEUT. XXXII. 11, 12.

Critchley, G., *When the Angels Have Gone Away*, 181.
Davies, D., *Talks*, iv. 406.
Dixon, A. C., *Milk and Meat*, 112.
Fullerton, W. Y., *God's High Way*, 92.
Hopkins, E. H., *Hidden Yet Possessed*, 27.
Hull, E. L., *Sermons*, iii. 131.
Jerdan, C., *The Wells of Salvation*, 42.
Kemble, C., *Memorials of a Closed Ministry*, i. 121.
Litchfield, G., *The House of the Potter*, 117.
Mackay, J. J., *Recent Letters of Christ*, 95.
Macmillan, H., *The Garden and the City*, 147.
MacNeill, J., *World Power*, 31.
Matheson, G., *Leaves for Quiet Hours*, 147.
Morrison, G., *The House of God*, 46.
Neale, J. M., *S. preached in a Religious House*, ii. 331.
Neville, W. G., *Sermons*, 238.
Purves, G. T., *Faith and Life*, 307.
Raleigh, A., *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, 219.
Ritson, J., *Life*, 163.
Taylor, W. M., *The Limitations of Life*, 78.
Thew, J., *Broken Ideals*, 39.
*Christian Age*, xli. 274 (J. W. Earnshaw).
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*Expository Times*, xx. 134.
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DEUT. XXXII. 12.

Holden, J. S., *The Confidence of Faith*, 17.

DEUT. XXXII. 15.

*Christian World Pulpit*, ii. 65 (A. Thomson).

DEUT. XXXII. 21.

*Christian World Pulpit*, c. 42 (F. W. Norwood).

DEUT. XXXII. 29.

Church, R. W., *Village S.*, ii. 317.
Hare, J. C., *S. preached in Herstmonceux Church*, i. 415.
Pigou, F., *Faith and Practice*, 269.

DEUT. XXXII. 30.

Barton, G. A., *The Roots of Christian Teaching*, 142.
Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place*, 114.

DEUT. XXXII. 31.

Banks, L. A., *On the Trail of Moses*, 251.
Black, J., *The Burthen of the Weeks*, 248.
Burrell, D. J., *The Morning Cometh*, 125.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc. 47.
Moody, D. L., *New S., Addresses and Prayers*, 445.
Newton, J., *The Problem of Personality*, 171.
Pritchard, T. H., in *Southern Baptist Pulpit*, 266.
Watkinson, W. L., *The Bane and the Antidote*, 14.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xxxvii. 74 (J. B. Bell); xxxviii. 124 (G. Robson); liii. 300 (W. L. Watkinson).
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DEUT. XXXII. 31-33.

Aitken, W. H. M. H., *The Love of the Father*, 241.

DEUT. XXXII. 32.

Abbott, L., *Signs of Promise*, 87.

DEUT. XXXII. 34-35.

Beecham, E. L., *A Divine Meaning in the Horrors of To-day*, 1.

DEUT. XXXII. 35.

Finney, C. G., *The Way of Salvation*, 234.
Tholuck, A., *Hours of Christian Devotion*, 128.

DEUT. XXXII. 39.

Alexander, W., *The Great Question*, 30.

DEUT. XXXII. 40.

Park, E. A., *Discourses*, 137.

DEUT. XXXII. 47.

Hardman, J. W., in *Harvest S.*, pt. iii. 33.
Ritson, J., *Life*, 107.
Vaughan, J., *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), xxi. No. 1196.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xliii. 131 (J. M. Lang).
*Church of England Pulpit*, xxxv. 208 (J. M. Lang).
*Church Pulpit Year Book*, xi. 145.

DEUT. XXXII. 48-52.

Batchelor, H., *The Incarnation of God*, 195.
Davies, D., *Talks*, v. 139.
Fairweather, R., *Sermons*, 115.
Kennedy, E. J., *Soul Attitudes*, 110.
*Christian Commonwealth*, xxxiv. (1914), 773 (R. J. Campbell).

DEUT. XXXII. 49, 50.

Stuart, K. M., *Light from the Holy Hills*, 57.

DEUT. XXXII. 51.

Macmillan, H., *The Daisies of Nazareth*, 204.

DEUT. XXXII. 52.

King, E., *The Love and Wisdom of God*, 193.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xxxvii. 51 (R. Betts).
*New York Treasury*, x. (1893), 926 (R. Betts).

DEUT. XXXIII.

Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 173.
Hasell, E. J., *Bible Partings*, 83.

DEUT. XXXIII. 1.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xcvi. 223 (J. Macmillan).

DEUT. XXXIII. 1-3.

Blackwood, A., *Conference Memories*, 25.

DEUT. XXXIII. 1, 27.

Horan, F. S., *A Call to Seamen*, 131.

DEUT. XXXIII. 2, 3.

Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place*, 154.
Wills, J., *The Challenge of the Cross*, 230.
*Contemporary Pulpit*, x. 218 (W. L. Watkinson).

DEUT. XXXIII. 3.

Mackay, J. J., *Recent Letters of Christ*, 109.
Maclaren, A., *Leaves from the Tree of Life*, 199.
Vaughan, J., *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), v. No. 545.
Whitfield, F., *Light and Life in Christ*, 130.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xxii. 324 (W. L. Alexander).
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DEUT. XXXIII. 4.

Palmer, E. R., *The Development of Revelation*, 128.

DEUT. XXXIII. 6.

Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 47.

DEUT. XXXIII. 7.

Neale, J. M., *S. preached in a Religious House*, 2nd ser., i. 53.
Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 82.

DEUT. XXXIII. 8-11.

Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 70.

DEUT. XXXIII. 12.

Dewhurst, E. M., *The King and His Servants*, 232.
Norton, J. N., *Golden Truths*, 391.
Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 185.
*Preacher's Magazine*, 1894, p. 365 (H. P. Wright).

DEUT. XXXIII. 13.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xxv. 135 (G. W. McCree).

DEUT. XXXIII. 14.

Simpson, H. L., *Put Forth by the Moon*, 66.

DEUT. XXXIII. 16.

Brooks, P., *The Candle of the Lord*, 39.
Matheson, G., *Moments on the Mount*, 256.

Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place*, 183.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xlvii. 139 (J. C. Lees).

DEUT. XXXIII. 17.

Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 164, 175.

DEUT. XXXIII. 18, 19.

Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 96, 106.

DEUT. XXXIII. 19.

Macmillan, H., *The Clock of Nature*, 338.
Robertson, S., *The Rope of Hair*, 240.

DEUT. XXXIII. 20, 21.

Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 139.

DEUT. XXXIII. 22.

Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 118.

DEUT. XXXIII. 23.

Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 129.

DEUT. XXXIII. 24, 25.

Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl*, 151.

DEUT. XXXIII. 25.

Alexander, A., *A Day at a Time*, 11.
Banks, L. A., *On the Trail of Moses*, 259.
Burrell, D. J., *The Religion of the Future*, 104.
Clifford, J., *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, 1.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 194.
— *Redeeming Vision*, 31.
Jowett, J. H., *The Eagle Life*, 41.
Knight, G. H., *Abiding Help for Changing Days*, 11.
Learmount, J., *God's Endings*, 88.
Mackey, H. O., *Miniature S.*, 70.
Matheson, G., *My Aspirations*, 8.
Moore, A. L., *From Advent to Advent*, 98.
Morrison, G. H., *Our Days and Our Strength*, 3.
New, C., *The Baptism of the Spirit*, 195.
Raleigh, A., *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, 337.
Ritson, J., *Life*, 179.
Vaughan, J., *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), xi. No. 868.
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*Homiletic Review*, lvii. (1909) 67 (D. J. Burrell).

DEUT. XXXIII. 26.

Pulsford, J., *Infoldings and Unfoldings*, 77.
*Church of England Pulpit*, lv. 242 (J. Napleton).
*20th Century Pastor*, xxvii. (1910) 338 (T. D. Witherspoon).

DEUT. XXXIII. 27.

Alexander, A., *The Stuff of Life*, 17.
Charles, R. H., *The Adventure into the Unknown*, 42.
Cuyler, T. L., *God's Light from Dark Clouds*, 70.
Darlow, T. H., *The Upward Calling*, 154.
Fairbairn, R. B., *College S.*, 302.
Hunter, J., *De Profundis Clamavi*, 310.
Hutton, J. A., *The Fear of Things*, 1.
Ingram, A. F. W., *The Spirit of Peace*, 218.
Metcalfe, W. M., *Sermons*, 57.
Parks, L., *The Winning of the Soul*, 201.
Peabody, F. G., *Mornings in the College Chapel*, i. 83.
Robinson, J. A., *Holy Ground*, 26, 39.
— *Unity in Christ*, 125, 139.
Ryder, A. R., *The Vision of Christ*, 180.
Shillito, E., *Looking Inwards*, 48.
Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place*, 345.
Torry, C. E., *Sixteen S.*, 66.
Wardell, R. J., *Studies in Homiletics*, 94.
Wilberforce, B., *Seeing God*, 26.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xxix. 209 (F. W. Farrar); lv. 4 (C. S. Horne); lxviii. 401 (J. Hunter); lxxxvi. 56 (B. Wilberforce); xcii. 273 (J. F. Newton).
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DEUT. XXXIII. 29.

Cairns, J., *Christ the Morning Star*, 177.
Morrison, G. H., *Sun-Rise*, 94.

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DEUT. XXXIV. 1.

Brown, J. B., *The Soul's Exodus*, 334.
Vaughan, J., *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), xxiv. No. 1267.
*Guardian*, lxxi. (1916) 985 (B. Pollock).

DEUT. XXXIV. 1-4.

Banks, L. A., *On the Trail of Moses*, 268.
Burrell, D. J., *The Cloister Book*, 194.
Means, S., *Parish S.*, 38.
Miller, J., *Sermons*, ii. 351.
*Biblical Review*, iv. (1919) 506 (H. E. Kirk).
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DEUT. XXXIV. 1-7.

Batchelor, H., *The Incarnation of God*, 195.

DEUT. XXXIV. 1-8.

Allon, H., *The Vision of God*, 165.
Christlieb, T., *Memoir and S.*, 368.
*Sunday Magazine*, 1875, p. 486 (H. Allon).

DEUT. XXXIV. 1-12.

Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments*, 246.

DEUT. XXXIV. 4.

Brooks, P., *The More Abundant Life*, 105.
Doney, C. G., *The Throne-Room of the Soul*, 113.
Greenhough, J. G., *Half-Hours in God's Older Picture Gallery*, 62.
Harris, H., *Short S.*, 262.
Lockyer, T. F., *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, 158.
Neale, J. M., *Sackville College Chapel S.*, i. 160.
Neville, W. G., *Sermons*, 219.
Wilson, S. L., *Helpful Words*, 287.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxiv. 75 (T. B. McCorkindale); civ. 89 (R. Robertson).
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Sunday after Ascension Day, ix. 9.

DEUT. XXXIV. 4-6.

*Church Pulpit Year Book*, i. 137.

DEUT. XXXIV. 5.

Brooke, S. A., *The O.T. and Modern Life*, 157.
Danks, W., *The Church on the Moor*, 94.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 195.
Minifie, W. C., *The Mask Torn Off*, 135.
Woodford, J. R., *S. on O.T. Subjects*, 27.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xx. 3 (A. Scott); xxxiii. 138 (A. Mackennal).
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Sunday after Ascension Day, ix. 16 (W. Danks), 18 (C. Bradley).

DEUT. XXXIV. 5, 6.

Banks, L. A., *On the Trail of Moses*, 277.
Beaumont, J. A., *Walking Circumspectly*, 131.
Davies, J., *The Kingdom Without Observation*, 187.
Hull, E. L., *S. at King's Lynn*, iii. 119.
Kingsley, C., *The Gospel of the Pentateuch*, 238.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 77.
— *The Unchanging Christ*, 181.
Meyer, F. B., *Moses*, 185.
Myres, W. M., *Fragments that Remain*, 42.
Pearse, M. G., *Moses*, 279.
Tuttle, A. H., *Egypt to Canaan*, 272.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Sunday after Ascension Day, ix. 12 (C. Jannings), 14 (W. M. Myres).
*Contemporary Pulpit*, ix. 373 (A. Maclaren).
*Expository Times*, xx. 253.
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DEUT. XXXIV. 5-7.

Parkhurst, C. H., *A Little Lower than the Angels*, 174.

DEUT. XXXIV. 5, 6, 10.

Rendall, G. H., *Charterhouse S.*, 24.

DEUT. XXXIV. 6.

Ker, J., *Sermons*, i. 153.
Matheson, G., *Messages of Hope*, 50.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxiii. 326 (W. Lefroy); xc. 16 (T. Yeats); xcv. 65 (H. Bickley).
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Sunday after Ascension Day, ix. 20 (H. Goodwin).

DEUT. XXXIV. 7.

Banks, L. A., *On the Trail of Moses*, 268.
Pattison, T. H., *The South Wind*, 117.

DEUT. XXXIV. 8.

Wright, D., *The Power of an Endless Life*, 40.

DEUT. XXXIV. 9.

Brooke, S. A., in *Expository S. and Outlines*, 75.
Metcalfe, W. M., *Sermons*, 116.
*Church Pulpit Year Book*, viii. 110.

DEUT. XXXIV. 10.

*Jewish Chronicle*, Oct. 1, 1915.

DEUT. XXXIV. 12.

Jerdan, C., *Gospel Milk and Honey*, 301.

# JOSHUA

## COMMENTARIES FOR REFERENCE

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## INDEX TO SERMONS

JOSH. I. 1, 2.

Morgan, E., *The Calls of God*, 81.
Wharton, M. B., *Famous Men of the O.T.*, 91.

JOSH. I. 1-9.

Parker, J., *The People's Bible*, v. 44.
Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments*, 254.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Sunday after Ascension Day, xi. 23 (D. O. Mears).

JOSH. I. 1-11.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 87.

JOSH. I. 2.

Simpson, H. L., *Put Forth by the Moon*, 77.
Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place*, 206.
Webb-Peploe, H. W., in *Keswick Week*, 1900, p. 29.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxii. 355 (J. F. Cowan); lxxvi. 200 (N. G. Phelps); lxxxi. 49 (R. M. Gautrey).

JOSH. I. 2-6.

Brooke, S. A., *The Unity of God and Man*, 126.

JOSH. 1. 3.

Hickey, F. P., *Short S.*, ii. 214.
*Christian Age*, xlii. 338 (W. H. P. Faunce).

JOSH. I. 4.

Sanderson, T., *The Illimitable Domain*, 1.

JOSH. I. 5.

Parker, J., *The City Temple*, iv. 17.

JOSH. I. 5, 6.

King, E., *The Love and Wisdom of God*, 20.
*New York Treasury*, xx. 683 (S. S. Roche).

JOSH. I. 5-7.

Plowden-Wardlaw, J. T., *The Test of War*, 72.

JOSH. I. 6.

Buxton, H. J. W., *Day by Day Duty*, 147.
Moody, D. L., *London Discourses*, 166.
— *New S., Addresses and Prayers*, 25.
Ross, D. M., *A Scottish Minister and Soldier*, 101.
Stalker, J., *The New Song*, 141.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxviii. 75 (G. Jackson); lxxxii. 302 (W. Gadsby).

JOSH I. 6, 7.

Raleigh, A., *The Way to the City*, 89.
Stanley, A. P., *S. on Special Occasions*, 241.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xvi. 17 (A. P. Stanley).
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Sunday after Ascension Day, xi. 25 (G. Jackson), 28 (W. S. Wood).
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JOSH. I. 6, 7, 9, 18.

Moody, D. L., *The Faithful Saying*, 21.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lviii. 74 (T. Parr).

JOSH. I. 7.

Barton, G. A., *Roots of Christian Teaching*, 134.
Chapman, J. W., *Pocket S.*, No. 1, p. 67.
Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Sundays after Trinity, i.-xii. 31.
Meyer, F. B., *Joshua*, 16.
Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place*, 122.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxv. 279 (J. N. Milne).

JOSH. I. 7, 8.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 91.

JOSH. I. 8.

Albertson, C. C., *College S.*, 147.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 196.
Hyamson, M., *The Oral Law*, 116.
Jenkinson, A., *A Modern Disciple*, 169.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxv. 139 (J. W. Walker).

JOSH. I. 9.

Darlow, T. H., *The Upward Calling*, 303.
Goodwin, H., in *Report of the Church Congress*, 1887, p. 150.
Greenhough, J. G., *Half-Hours in God's Older Picture Gallery*, 71.
Thring, E., *Uppingham S.*, ii. 302.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lvi. 56 (A. H. Shaw); lxxxiv. 92 (R. M. Gautrey).
*Church Pulpit Year Book*, xiv. 135.
*Record*, May 11, 1916 (G. P. Bassett-Kerry).
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JOSH. I. 11.

Garbett, E., *Experiences of the Inner Life*, 255.
Meyer, F. B., *Joshua*, 24.

JOSH. I. 14, 15.

*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, i. 310.

JOSH. I. 16.

Stuart, E. A., *Sermons* (*The City Pulpit*), 199.
*Church Times*, June 29, 1917 (J. N. Figgis).

JOSH. I. 16-18.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xci. 145 (R. C. Gillie).

JOSH. II.

McNeill, J., *Regent Square Pulpit*, iii. 361.

JOSH. II. 1.

Macmillan, H., *Gleanings in Holy Fields*, 224.

JOSH. II. 7.

Stone, J. T., *Places of Quiet Strength*, 215.

JOSH. II. 18.

Burrell, D. J., *The Unaccountable Man*, 88.
MacArthur, R. S., *Quick Truths in Quaint Texts*, ii. 36.
*20th Century Pastor*, xxxix. 114 (J. W. Chapman).

JOSH. II. 21.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 197.
Jones, J. S., *Seeing Darkly*, 27.
Morgan, G. H., *Modern Knights-Errant*, 74.
*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, i. 314.
*Homiletic Review*, xxxiv. 131 (H. Macmillan).

JOSH. III. 4.

Christopherson, H., *Sermons*, ii. 159.
Gibson, J. G., *Stepping Stones to Life*, 16.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 198.
Inge, W. R., *All Saints' S.*, 49.
Laidlaw, J., *Studies in the Parables*, 219.
Leach, C., *Old Yet Ever New*, 1.
Litchfield, G., *The House of the Potter*, 123.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 99.
Minto, P. W., *Memorials*, 1.
Morrison, G. H., *The Untrodden Way*, 3.
Neale, J. M., *Sackville College Chapel S.*, iv. 34.
Nicholson, M., *Redeeming the Time*, 217.
Nicholson, W. T., *The Mysteries of God*, 130.
Norton, J. N., *Warning and Teaching*, 54.
Parker, J., *The Ark of God*, 26.
Raleigh, A., *The Way to the City*, 350.
Robinson, C. S., *S. on Neglected Texts*, 224.
Taylor, W. M., *Contrary Winds*, 80.
Wills, D., in *One Hundred Best S. for Special Days*, 67.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxvii. 76 (A. Phimister); lxxix. 410 (J. S. Maver); xciv. 133 (G. L. S. Thompson).

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*Churchman's Pulpit:* Old and New Year, ii. 414 (M. P. Maturin).
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*Expositor and Current Anecdotes,* xvi. (1914-15), 257 (D. Wills); xviii. (1916-17) 376 (G. B. F. Hallock).
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*Sunday Strand,* ii. 117 (P. Brooks).

JOSH. III. 5.

Aitken, W. H. M. H., *The Highway of Holiness,* 95.
Findlay, D. J., in *Keswick Week,* 1907, p. 142.
Mantle, J. G., *God's To-Morrow,* 1.
Moore, E. W., in *Keswick Week,* 1901, p. 28.
Pusey, E. B., *Sermons,* 35.
*Record,* June 21, 1907 (F. S. G. Warman).

JOSH. III. 5-17.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 107.
Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments,* 261.

JOSH. III. 8.

Burrell, D. J., *The Church in the Fort,* 82.

JOSH. III. 9, 10.

*Church Family Newspaper,* July 3, 1914 (W. Williams).

JOSH. III. 10.

Meyer, F. B., *Joshua,* 32.
Statham, S. M., *S. in Brief for a Year,* 135.
Webster, F. S., *Trusting and Triumphing,* 1.

JOSH. III. 11.

Wright, D., *Waiting for the Light,* 304.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* 1st Sunday after Trinity, ix. 433 (D. Wright).
*Church Pulpit Year Book,* xiii. 139.

JOSH. III. 11-13.

Waller, C. H., *The Silver Sockets,* 28.

JOSH. III. 14-17.

*Church Family Newspaper,* March 3, 1911 (J. E. C. Welldon).
*Guardian,* lxvi. 302 (J. E. C. Welldon).

JOSH. III. 15.

*Experience,* xxxii. (1913) 71 (A. Barraclough).

JOSH. III. 15, 17.

Campbell, R. J., *S. Addressed to Individuals,* 89.

JOSH. III. 16.

*Journal of Biblical Literature,* xxxvi. 53 (M. Jastrow).

JOSH. III. 17.

Woodford, J. R., *Sermons:* O. T. Series, 40.

JOSH. IV. 3.

Burrell, D. J., *Wayfarers of the Bible,* 97.

JOSH. IV. 6.

Archibald, M. G., *Sundays at the Royal Military College,* 3.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 199.
MacArthur, R. S., *Calvary Pulpit,* 268.
Robertson, A., *Venetian S.,* 95.
Simpson, H. L., *Put Forth by the Moon,* 86.
*Children's Great Texts of the Bible,* i. 319.
*Guardian,* lxxii. 787 (G. F. Browne).

JOSH. IV. 8.

Thring, E., *Uppingham S.,* ii. 62.

JOSH. IV. 10.

Webb-Peploe, H. W., in *Keswick Week,* 1900, p. 29.

JOSH. IV. 10-24.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 115.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* 1st Sunday after Trinity, ix. 435 (W. G. Sperry).

JOSH. IV. 14.

*Churchman's Pulpit:* 1st Sunday after Trinity, ix. 438 (S. C. Haines).

JOSH. IV. 21.

Jerdan, C., *Gospel Milk and Honey,* 234.

JOSH. IV. 22.

Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments,* 269.
*Church Pulpit Year Book,* viii. 241.

JOSH. IV. 23.

Parker, J., *Studies in Texts,* vi. 58.
— in *British Weekly Pulpit,* ii. 542.

JOSH. V. 9.

Wilkinson, J. B., *Mission S.,* ii. 53.
*Literary Churchman,* 1886, p. 549 (J. B. C. Murphy).

JOSH. V. 10-12.

Meyer, F. B., *Joshua,* 50.

JOSH. V. 12.

Evans, E. H., *True and False Aims,* 28.
Macmillan, H., *Two Worlds are Ours,* 177.

Matheson, G., *My Aspirations*, 87.
Morrison, G. H., *The Wings of the Morning*, 44.
Neale, J. M., *S. on the Blessed Sacrament*, 140.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lii. 113 (W. B. Carpenter).
*Sunday Magazine*, 1879, p. 125 (H. Macmillan).

JOSH. V. 13.

Ealand, F., *The Spirit of Life*, 110.
Felce, W., *The War of Freedom*, 94.
Vaughan, C. J., *The Presence of God*, 271.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* 1st Sunday after Trinity, ix. 441 (F. Ealand).

JOSH. V. 13, 14.

Gowen, H. H., *The Kingdom of Man*, 121.
Jerdan, C., *Manna for Young Pilgrims*, 51.
Macfarlane, W. H., *Redemptive Service*, 54.
Simcox, W. H., *The Cessation of Prophecy*, 89.
Singer, S., *S. and Memoir*, 172.
Vaughan, J., *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), i. No. 254.
Walker, G., *For the Great Cause*, 1.
*Church of England Pulpit*, xxxviii. 305 (E. A. Stuart).
*Church Pulpit Year Book*, xiv. 152.
*Clergyman's Magazine*, 3rd ser., i. (1891) 301 (G. R. Monereiff).

JOSH. V. 13-15.

Banks, L. A., *S. which have won Souls*, 347.
Davies, D., *Talks*, iv. 95.
Ingram, A. F. W., *Under the Dome*, 254.
Meyer, F. B., *Joshua*, 58.
Stanford, C., *Symbols of Christ*, 89.
Tipple, S. A., *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, 215.
*Church of England Pulpit*, lvii. 182 (J. Penfold).

JOSH. V. 13-15; VI. 1, etc.

Moore, E. W., *Christ in Possession*, 142.

JOSH. V. 13-15; VI. 2.

Webster, F. S., *The Beauties of the Saviour*, 31.

JOSH. V. 14.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 200.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 123.

JOSH. V. 15.

Robinson, J. A., *Holy Ground*, 15.
— *Unity in Christ*, 167.

JOSH. VI.

McNeill, J., *Regent Square Pulpit*, ii. 161.
Meyer, F. B., *Joshua*, 67.

JOSH. VI. 1-16.

Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments*, 276.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* 1st Sunday after Trinity, ix. 443 (W. E. Griffis).

JOSH. VI. 1-21.

*Sunday Magazine*, 1879, p. 423 (F. E. Arnold).

JOSH. VI. 2.

Webster, F. S., *The Beauties of the Saviour*, 31.

JOSH. VI. 5.

Smith, Mrs. P., *The God of All Comfort*, 189.

JOSH. VI. 6, 7.

*Christian World Pulpit*, x. 152 (G. B. Johnson).

JOSH. VI. 10, 11.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 132.
— *Leaves from the Tree of Life*, 237.

JOSH. VI. 10, 15.

Davies, D., *Talks*, iv. 123.

JOSH. VI. 12.

Nash, L. L., *Early Morning Scenes in the Bible*, 101.

JOSH. VI. 17.

Arnold, T. K., *Sermons*, 24.

JOSH. VI. 20.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 201.
Hunt, A. N., *S. for the Christian Year*, ii. 25.
Leach, C., *Old Yet Ever New*, 183.
Maclaren, A., *Leaves from the Tree of Life*, 242.
Mantle, J. G., *God's To-morrow*, 81.
Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence*, 313.
Wright, W. B., *The World to Come*, 74.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xl. 262 (C. Leach).
*Church Pulpit Year Book*, xii. 128.

JOSH. VI. 21.

Palmer, E. R., *The Development of Revelation*, 140.

JOSH. VI. 23.

Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place*, 374.

JOSH. VI. 25.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 140.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Women of the Bible:* O.T. Series, 65.

JOSH. VI. 26.

Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place,* 375.

JOSH. VII.

Jeffs, H., *The Art of Exposition,* 116.
McNeill, J., *Regent Square Pulpit,* i. 81.
Meyer, F. B., *Joshua,* 85.

JOSH. VII. 1.

Macleod, A., *The Child Jesus,* 187.

JOSH. VII. 1-12.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 145.
Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments,* 284.

JOSH. VII. 1-26.

Garvie, A. E., *A Course of Bible Study,* 117.
Morrison, G. H., *The Footsteps of the Flock,* 105.

JOSH. VII. 3, 4.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xc. 92 (J. Macmillan).

JOSH. VII. 6.

Byrum, E. E., *The Secret of Prayer,* 122.

JOSH. VII. 8.

Virgin, S. H., *Spiritual Sanity,* 245.
*Christian World Pulpit,* xcvii. 141 (J. Macmillan).

JOSH. VII. 8, 10.

Battersby-Harford, J., in *Keswick Week,* 1908, p. 20.

JOSH. VII. 10.

Campbell, J. M., *Bible Questions,* 15.
*Christian World Pulpit,* xviii. 40 (J. B. Heard).
*Church of England Pulpit,* xlvii. 27 (A. T. Bannister).

JOSH. VII. 12.

Burrell, D. J., *For Christ's Crown,* 361.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 202.
Murray, A., *The Ministry of Intercession,* 67.
Peek, G. C., *Bible Tragedies,* 53.

JOSH. VII. 13.

MacArthur, R. S., in *The Weekly Pulpit,* ii. 531.
Moore, E. W., *Christ in Possession,* 165.
Morrow, H. W., *Under the Shadow of God,* 200.
Rankin, J., *Character Studies in the O.T.,* 116.
*Homiletic Review,* xviii. 436 (C. H. Irvine).

JOSH. VII. 17.

*Jewish Quarterly Review,* iii. (1913) 319 (M. L. Margolis).

JOSH. VII. 19.

Oosterzee, J. J. van, *The Year of Salvation,* ii. 406.
Vaughan, C. J., *Liturgy and Worship,* 53.

JOSH. VII. 19, 20.

Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Lent to Passiontide, 83.
Vaughan, J., *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), x. No. 831.

JOSH. VII. 20, 21.

Leach, C., *S. to Working-Men,* 191.
*Literary Churchman,* 1891, p. 276 (J. T. Parsons).

JOSH. VII. 21.

Clayton, J. W., *The Genius of God,* 76.
Knight, G. H., *These Three,* 76.
Macmillan, H., *Gleanings in Holy Fields,* 178.
*Christian World Pulpit,* xiv. 104 (A. Mursell).
*Expositor,* 2nd ser., i. 454 (E. H. Plumptre).
*Homiletic Review,* xxxi. 35 (T. T. Eaton).

JOSH. VII. 25.

*Christian World Pulpit,* lxxvi. 76 (H. Jeffs).

JOSH. VII. 25, 26.

*Christian World Pulpit,* lxxvi. 199 (G. H. Abey).

JOSH. VII. 26.

Moulton, J. H., *Visions of Sin,* 37.
Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence,* 72.

JOSH. VIII. 1.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xc. 92 (J. Macmillan).

JOSH. VIII. 1, 2.

Meyer, F. B., *Joshua,* 76.

JOSH. VIII. 12, 16.

*Jewish Quarterly Review,* vii. (1917) 491 (M. L. Margolis).

JOSH. VIII. 26.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 203.

JOSH. VIII. 30.

Meyer, F. B., *Joshua,* 95.

JOSH. VIII. 30-35.
Jowett, J. H., *My Daily Meditation*, 48.

JOSH. VIII. 34.
Jerdan, C., *Manna for Young Pilgrims*, 396.

JOSH. IX.
Meyer, F. B., *Joshua*, 102.

JOSH. IX. 3-27.
Garvie, A. E., *A Course of Bible Study*, 109.

JOSH. IX. 4-6.
Smith, D., *The Pilgrim's Hospice*, 73.

JOSH. IX. 5.
Clarke, J. E., *Common-Life S.*, 144.
Davies, D., *Talks*, v. 25.

JOSH. IX. 14.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xvi. 226 (P. Robertson).

JOSH. IX. 14, 15.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lviii. 346 (J. A. Irvine).

JOSH. IX. 15.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 204.

JOSH. X. 6.
Hutton, R. E., *The Crown of Christ*, i. 239.

JOSH. X. 12.
Campbell, R. J., *The Song of Ages*, 203.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 153.

JOSH. X. 12, 13.
Gibson, E. C. S., *The O.T. and its Messages*, 55.
Learmount, J., *God's Endings*, 45.

JOSH. X. 12-14.
Burrell, D. J., *The Church in the Fort*, 104.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xli. 294 (W. Ewen).
*Church of England Pulpit*, xxxiv. 279 (W. Ewen).

JOSH. X. 12-15.
*Expositor*, i. 1 (S. Cox).

JOSH. X. 13.
Gibbon, J. M., *The Vision and the Call*, 17.
Matheson, G., *Thoughts for Life's Journey*, 228.
*Christian Age*, xxviii. 130 (W. M. Taylor).
*Expositor*, 8th ser., xii (1916) 321 (A. van Hoonacker).
*Expositor and Current Anecdotes*, xxiii. (1921-22) 80 (D. J. Burrell).

JOSH. X. 14.
Cuyler, T. L., *A Model Christian*, 43.
Hood, E. P., *The Villages of the Bible*, 122.
Jerdan, C., *Manna for Young Pilgrims*, 38.
Meyer, F. B., *Joshua*, 110.
*Christian Commonwealth*, xxxi. (1911) 573 (R. J. Campbell).

JOSH. X. 18, 19.
Simpson, H. L., *The Intention of His Soul*, 181.

JOSH. X. 22, 26.
Hutton, R. E., *The Crown of Christ*, i. 239.

JOSH. X. 24, 25.
Chapman, J. W., *And Judas Iscariot*, 215.

JOSH. X. 40-42.
Goodwin, H., *Parish S.*, v. 93.

JOSH. X. 42.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 205.

JOSH. XI.
Meyer, F. B., *Joshua*, 118.

JOSH. XI. 9.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 206.

JOSH. XI. 15.
Watkinson, W. L., *The Blind Spot*, 73.

JOSH. XI. 18.
Jerdan, C., *Pastures of Tender Grass*, 17.

JOSH. XI. 20.
Kuyper, A., *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, 592.

JOSH. XI. 23.
Meyer, F. B., *Joshua*, 126.

JOSH. XII. 24.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 207.

JOSH. XIII. 1.
Guthrie, T., *The Way to Life*, 297.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 208.
McNeill, J., *Regent Square Pulpit*, iii. 393.
Meyer, F. B., *Joshua*, 135.
Vince, C., *The Unchanging Saviour*, 120.
Young, D. T., *The Gospel of the Left Hand*, 45.
*Expositor*, 8th ser., xiii. (1917) 211 (G. A. Cooke).
*Homiletic Review*, xx. 420 (A. S. Hoyt).
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JOSH. XIII. 1-6.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 158.

JOSH. XIII. 22.

Lock, W., *The Bible and Christian Life,* 141.

JOSH. XIV.

Meyer, F. B., *Joshua,* 143.

JOSH. XIV. 5-15.

Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments,* 292.

JOSH. XIV. 6.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 160.
Young, D. T., *Neglected People of the Bible,* 59.

JOSH. XIV. 6-13.

McNeill, J., *Regent Square Pulpit,* iii. 393.

JOSH. XIV. 6-14.

*Sunday Strand,* v. 23 (J. H. Jowett).

JOSH. XIV. 8.

Darlow, T. H., *The Upward Calling,* 77.
Holden, J. S., *Life's Flood-Tide,* 134.
*Christian World Pulpit,* lxxiv. 183 (H. G. Edge); civ. 125 (J. Pearse).

JOSH. XIV. 8, 12.

Forbes, J. T., in *Free Church Year Book,* 1908, p. 104.
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JOSH. XIV. 12.

Burrell, D. J., *The Cloister Book,* 143.
Davies, T., *Sermonic Studies,* 23.
Stuart, K. M., *Light from the Holy Hills,* 68.

JOSH. XIV. 12, 13.

Davies, D., *Talks,* i. 123.

JOSH. XIV. 13.

*Christian World Pulpit,* lxxxiv. 173 (H. Jeffs).

JOSH. XIV. 14.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 209.

JOSH. XV. 2, 5.

*Journal of Biblical Literature,* xxx. (1911) 18 (G. F. Wright).

JOSH. XV. 13-17.

Hood, E. P., *The Villages of the Bible,* 151.

JOSH. XV. 18, 19.

Banks, L. A., *The Great Saints of the Bible,* 147.

JOSH. XV. 19.

Chapman, J. W., *Bells of Gold,* 75.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 210.
Mackay, W. M., *Bible Types of Modern Women,* 242.
*Christian World Pulpit,* lxii. 42 (R. Leggat).

JOSH. XVI. 1.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 211.

JOSH. XVII. 14.

Richards, W. R., *For Whom Christ Died,* 23.

JOSH. XVII. 18.

Banks, L. A., *The Great Saints of the Bible,* 157.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 212.

JOSH. XVIII.

Meyer, F. B., *Joshua,* 158.

JOSH. XVIII. 1, 6.

*Christian World Pulpit,* x. 152 (G. B. Johnson).

JOSH. XVIII. 1-10.

Blackwood, A., *Conference Memories,* 141.

JOSH. XVIII. 3.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 213.

JOSH. XVIII. 19.

*Journal of Biblical Literature,* xxx. (1911), 18 (G. F. Wright).

JOSH. XIX. 50.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 214.
*New York Treasury,* xix. 505 (J. E. White).

JOSH. XX. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8.

Grubb, G. C., *Unsearchable Riches,* 113.

JOSH. XX. 1-9.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 168.

JOSH. XX. 2.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 215.

JOSH. XXI. 43-45.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 175.
Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments,* 299.

JOSH. XXI. 45.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 216.

JOSH. XXII.

Meyer, F. B., *Joshua,* 166.

JOSH. XXII. 1-9.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 175.

Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments,* 299.

JOSH. XXII. 5.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 217.

JOSH. XXII. 6.

Dunbar, J. W., *The Beatitudes of the O.T.,* 75.

JOSH. XXII. 10.

Stephenson, T. B., *Words of a Year,* 43.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xl. 305 (T. B. Stephenson).

JOSH. XXII. 16.

Parker, J., *Studies in Texts,* vi. 67.

JOSH. XXII. 20.

Greenhough, J. G., in *Men of the O.T.:* Cain to David, 183.

Howard, H., *The Conning-Tower of the Soul,* 141.

Thorne, H., *Notable Sayings,* 178.

JOSH. XXII. 28, 34.

*Christian World Pulpit,* lx. 91 (A. E. Hooper).

JOSH. XXII. 34.

Christopherson, H., *Sermons,* ii. 110.

JOSH. XXIII.

Meyer, F. B., *Joshua,* 173.

JOSH. XXIII. 1.

Newman, J. H., *S. on Subjects of the Day,* 150.

JOSH. XXIII. 1-3.

Maurice, F. D., *Patriarchs and Lawgivers,* 305.

JOSH. XXIII. 6.

Evans, A. B., in *Anglican Pulpit Library,* ix. 236.

JOSH. XXIII. 8.

Paget, F. E., *S. for Special Occasions,* 115.

JOSH. XXIII. 11.

Witherow, J. M., *Grapes of God,* 98.

JOSH. XXIII. 11-15.

Goodwin, H., *Parish S.,* v. 108.

JOSH. XXIII. 14.

Christopherson, H., *Sermons,* ii. 1.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 218.

Raleigh, A., *Thoughts for the Weary,* 81.

Vaughan, J., in *Anglican Pulpit Library,* ii. 188.

— *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), xii. No. 926.

*Church Missionary Review,* lxiv. 653 (B. Baring-Gould).

JOSH. XXIV.

Meyer, F. B., *Joshua,* 180.

JOSH. XXIV. 1-15.

Jowett, J. H., *My Daily Meditation,* 240.

JOSH. XXIV. 2, 3.

Dykes, J. O., *Abraham,* 29.

JOSH. XXIV. 4.

Smith, D., *Man's Need of God,* 215.

JOSH. XXIV. 10.

*Christian World Pulpit,* li. 153 (B. J. Snell).

JOSH. XXIV. 13.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xix. 133 (J. Vickery).

JOSH. XXIV. 13, 14.

Paterson, W. P., *In the Day of the Ordeal,* 76.

JOSH. XXIV. 14.

*Christian World Pulpit,* lxxxvii. 150 (E. Booth).

JOSH. XXIV. 14, 15.

Hamilton, J., *Works,* vi. 116, 134.

JOSH. XXIV. 14, 24.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xvi. 307 (G. Woolnough).

JOSH. XXIV. 15.

Alford, H., *Quebec Chapel S.,* iii. 423.

Bryce, W. Kirk, *Life's Greatest Forces,* 93.

Campbell, R. J., *S. to Young Men,* 3.

Diggle, J. W., *S. for Daily Life,* 89.

Girdlestone, A. G., *The Way, the Truth, the Life,* No. 6.

Greenhough, J. G., *Half-Hours in God's Older Picture Gallery,* 80.

Hare, J. C., *Parish S.,* i. 269.

Harford-Battersby, T. D., *Christ the First and the Last,* 182.

Howard, H., *The Conning-Tower of the Soul,* 163.

Howson, G. W. S., *S. by a Lay Headmaster,* 18.

Hughes, H. P., *The Philanthropy of God,* 45.

Jowett, J. H., *The Transfigured Church,* 253.

Kennedy, E. J., *Soul Attitudes,* 146.

Knight, G. H., *Abiding Help for Changing Days*, 139.
McFayden, J. E., in *Sub Corona*, 171.
Meharry, J. B., *Sermons*, 100.
Moore, A. L., *The Message of the Gospel*, 143.
Morgan, G. H., *Modern Knights-Errant*, 225.
Moule, H. C. G., *Thoughts for the Sundays of the Year*, 224.
Murphy, J. B. C., *The Service of the Master*, 124, 130.
Paterson, W. P., *In the Day of the Ordeal*, 162.
Perin, G. L., *The Sunny Side of Life*, 325.
Rutherford, J. S., *The Seriousness of Life*, 59.
Sclater, J. R. P., *The Enterprise of Life*, 261, 329.
Selby, T. G., *The God of the Patriarchs*, 273.
Smellie, A., *The Well by the Way*, 159.
— *In the Secret Place*, 57.
Spurgeon, C. H., *Twelve S. on Decision*, No. 1229.
Thompson, S. P., *A Not Impossible Religion*, 161.
*British Congregationalist*, June 11, 1908 (J. H. Jowett).
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*Christian World Pulpit*, vii. 289 (J. Kennedy); xiv. 309 (W. Anderson); xviii. 219 (J. Vaughan); xxvii. 11 (D. G. Watt); xxxvii. 55 (T. R. Stevenson); xliv. 104 (A. H. Bradford); lxxxi. 289 (W. C. Piggott); xcix. 73 (T. Yates).
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JOSH. XXIV. 16.

Horne, C. S., *The Soul's Awakening*, 203.

JOSH. XXIV. 17.

Butler, H. M., *University S.*, 278.

JOSH. XXIV. 19.

Ker, J., *Sermons*, i. 56.
Murphy, J. B. C., *The Service of the Master*, 177, 185, 192.

JOSH. XXIV. 19-28.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 183.
Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments*, 307.

JOSH. XXIV. 20.

Plowden-Wardlaw, J. T., *The Test of War*, 21.

JOSH. XXIV. 21.

Brooks, P., *Christ the Life and Light*, 138.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 219.

JOSH. XXIV. 22.

*New York Treasury*, xiii. 911 (D. Scudder).

JOSH. XXIV. 24.

*Churchman's Pulpit:* 1st Sunday after Trinity, ix. 446 (R. C. Ford).

JOSH. XXIV. 25.

Punshon, W. M., *Forty S.*, No. 3495.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xix. 56 (W. M. Punshon).

JOSH. XXIV. 26, 27.

Foster, J., *Lectures*, ii. 396.
Henson, H. H., *War-Time S.*, 61.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxvi. 168 (H. H. Henson).

JOSH. XXIV. 27.

Alford, H., *Quebec Chapel S.*, v. 63.
Brooks, P., *The Mystery of Iniquity*, 260.
Hunt, A. N., *S. for the Christian Year*, ii. 34.
Hutton, J. A., *The Victory over Victory*, 30.
Oosterzee, J. J. van, *The Year of Salvation*, ii. 408.
Parker, J., *City Temple Pulpit*, v. 262.
Tuckwell, W., *Nuggets from the Bible Mine*, 52.
*Church of England Pulpit*, xxxii. 113 (C. Wordsworth).
*Homiletic Review*, xxxix 419 (W. T. Sabine).

JOSH. XXIV. 29.

*Church of England Pulpit*, lxii. 355 (J. Silvester).

JOSH. XXIV. 31.

Selby, T. G., in *The Ladder of Life*, 199.

# JUDGES

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## INDEX TO SERMONS

JUDG. I.
*Expositor*, 3rd ser., v. 51 (A. B. Davidson).
JUDG. I. II.
Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 3.
JUDG. I. 1.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 220.
Parker, J., *The City Temple Pulpit*, i. 169.
JUDG. I. 6, 7.
Dawson, G., *Three Books of God*, 309.
JUDG. I. 7.
Mozley, J. B., *Lectures on the O.T.*, 129.
Parker, J., *The City Temple*, v. 182.
JUDG. I. 10-15.
Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.*, 21.
JUDG. I. 11.
*Christian World Pulpit* xxxiii. 152 (W. G. Horder).
JUDG. I. 13-15.
Neale, J. M., *S. preached in a Religious House*, ii. 494.
JUDG. I. 15.
Farningham, M., *Women and their Work*, 39.
JUDG. I. 19.
Williams, T. R., *God's Open Doors*, 190.
JUDG. I. 19, 20.
Spurgeon, C. H., *Twelve S. on the Christian Warfare*, No. 1690.
JUDG. I. 22-26.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxvi. 198 (D. Donaldson).
JUDG. I. 30, 33.
Mozley, J. B., *Lectures on the O.T.*, 138.
JUDG. II. 1.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 221.
Taylor, J., *Cameos of Comfort*, 27, 100.
JUDG. II. 1-3.
Mozley, J. B., *Lectures on the O.T.*, 135.
JUDG. II. 1-5.
Brown, J. B., *The Sunday Afternoon*, 185.
Candlish, R. S., *Sermons*, 155.
MacArthur, R. S., *Divine Balustrades*, 134.
JUDG. II. 1-10.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 192.
JUDG. II. 4, 5.
Macmillan, H., *The Touch of God*, 79.
JUDG. II. 5.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxvii. 275 (R. F. Horton).
JUDG. II. 6-10.
Davies, D., *Talks*, i. 107.
JUDG. II. 6-III. 6.
Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.*, 11.

JUDG. II. 7.

*Expositor,* 3rd ser., v. 51 (A. B. Davidson).

JUDG. II. 11-23.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 197.

Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies from the Old and New Testaments,* 314.

JUDG. II. 21, 22.

Matheson, G., *Thoughts for Life's Journey,* 123.

JUDG. III. 1.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 222.

JUDG. III. 8-11.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.,* 21.

JUDG. III. 9.

Gibbon, J. M., *The Vision and the Call,* 195.

Macgregor, G. H. C., *Messages of the O.T.,* 87.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xiii. 193 (W. M. Statham).

JUDG. III. 10.

Kuyper, A., *The Work of the Holy Spirit,* 38.

JUDG. III. 11.

Quetteville, P. W. de, *Short Studies on Vital Subjects,* 45.

JUDG. III. 12-30.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.,* 33.

JUDG. III. 15.

Parker, J., *The City Temple,* v. 184.

JUDG. III. 15, 16.

Windross, H., *The Life Victorious,* 83.

JUDG. III. 20.

Gibson, J. G., *Stepping Stones to Life,* 86.

JUDG. III. 31.

Davies, D., *Talks,* iii. 103; vi. 153.

Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence,* 285.

*20th Century Pastor,* xxvii. 8 (T. Kelly).

JUDG. IV.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.,* 45.

JUDG. IV. 3.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 223.

JUDG. IV. 4.

Dawson, W. J., *The Comrade-Christ,* 151.

JUDG. IV. 4, 5.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Women of the Bible:* O.T., 75.

JUDG. IV. 4, 6-16.

Adeney, W. F., in *Women of the Bible:* Rebekah to Priscilla, 45.

JUDG. IV. 4, 14.

Potter, H. C., *S. of the City,* 125.

JUDG. IV. 5.

Farningham, M., *Women and their Work,* 43.

JUDG. IV. 6.

Wilkinson, G. H., *The Heavenly Vision,* 248.

JUDG. IV. 8.

Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Sundays after Trinity, i.-xii., 64.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xl. 40 (W. B. Carpenter).

JUDG. IV. 8, 9.

Skrine, J. H., *Saints and Worthies,* 85.

JUDG. IV. 9.

Tuckwell, W., *Nuggets from the Bible Mine,* 63.

JUDG. IV. 14.

Burrell, D. J., *The Spirit of the Age,* 222.

*Church Pulpit Year Book,* viii. 122; ix. 125; xiii. 146.

*Literary Churchman,* 1883, p. 291 (W. S. Randall).

JUDG. IV. 17, 18, 21, 22.

Rowlands, D., in *Women of the Bible:* Rebekah to Priscilla, 65.

JUDG. IV. 17-24.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Women of the Bible:* O.T., 85.

JUDG. IV. 21.

Hiley, R. W., *A Year's S.,* i. 302.

JUDG. IV. 22.

Norton, J. N., *Every Sunday,* 425.

JUDG. V.

Adeney, W. F., in *Women of the Bible:* Rebekah to Priscilla, 45.

Brooke, S. A., *The O.T. and Modern Life,* 177.

Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age,* 173.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xcii. 107 (A. J. Seamer).

JUDG. V. 1.

*Church of England Pulpit,* lvi. 38 (T. J. Lawrence).

JUDG. V. 1, 2.

Maurice, F. D., *Patriarchs and Lawgivers,* 320.

*Christian World Pulpit,* lii. 189 (J. Stalker).

JUDG. V. 1-3.

Henson, H. H., *The Value of the Bible,* 53.

JUDG. V. 2.

Austin, A. B., *Linked Lives*, 55.
Barry, A., *S. preached at Westminster Abbey*, 231.
Macdonald, J. S., *S. preached in Time of War*, 21.
Parr, R. H., *The Path of the Just*, 60.

JUDG. V. 3.

Davies, D., *Talks*, iv. 173.

JUDG. V. 6.

Rowlands, D., in *Women of the Bible:* Rebekah to Priscilla, 65.
Young, D. T., *The Enthusiasm of God*, 148.

JUDG. V. 7.

Barton, G. A., *The Roots of Christian Teaching*, 138.
Farningham, M., *Women and their Work*, 47.
Mackay, W. M., *Bible Types of Modern Women*, 78.

JUDG. V. 7, 8.

Hood, E. P., *The Villages of the Bible*, 1.

JUDG. V. 10.

Clifton, E. J., *Bible Illustrations from Persia*, 153.

JUDG. V. 11.

Ingram, W. C., *Happiness in the Spiritual Life*, 85.
Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place*, 229.

JUDG. V. 12.

Spurgeon, C. H., *Twelve S. on Praise*, No. 340.

JUDG. V. 12-18.

Fraser, J., *University S.*, 137.

JUDG. V. 15, 16.

Fairweather, D., *Bound in the Spirit*, 167.
Watkinson, W. L., *Studies in Christian Character*, ii. 55.
*Christian World Pulpit*, liv. 257 (W. L. Watkinson).

JUDG. V. 15-17, 23.

Davies, D., *Talks*, iii. 161.

JUDG. V. 16.

Knight, G. H., *Abiding Help for Changing Days*, 131.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 206.
Paterson, W. P., *In the Day of the Muster*, 1.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxv. 38 (S. Horton).

JUDG. V. 20.

Jones, J. D., *The Hope of the Gospel*, 82.
Maclaren, A., *The Victor's Crowns*, 126.
— *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 209.
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JUDG. V. 21.

Aitken, W. H. M. H., *Newness of Life*, 197.
Cowan, R., *The Weakness of God*, 165.
Smellie, A., *Out of the Desert a Gift*, 58.

JUDG. V. 23.

Brooks, P., *The Candle of the Lord*, 287.
Brown, C. J., *The Word of Life*, 63.
Doney, C. G., *The Throne-Room of the Soul*, 149.
Eyton, R., *The Temptation of Jesus*, 104.
Gwatkin, H. M., *The Sacrifice of Thankfulness*, 156.
Hadden, R. H., *S. and Memoir*, 139.
Henson, H. H., *Christ and the Nation*, 73.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 224.
Ingram, A. F. W., *A Mission of the Spirit*, 83.
Knight, G. H., *Abiding Help*, 131.
Liddon, H. P., *University S.*, ii. 264.
Muir, J., *War and Christian Duty*, 157.
Shillito, E., *The New Days*, 79.
Skrine, J. H., *A Goodly Heritage*, 52.
Smith, W. M., *Giving a Man Another Chance*, 101.
Smith, W. S., *How One Church Went Through a War*, 7.
Stuart, J., *Church and Home*, 122.
Wilberforce, B., *Spiritual Consciousness*, 16.
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JUDG. V. 23, 24.

Mayor, J. B., *The World's Desire*, 102.

JUDG. V. 24.

Arnold, T., *Sermons*, vi. 57.
Gibson, E. C. S., *The O.T. and its Messages*, 66.
Liddon, H. P., *S.* (*The Penny Pulpit*), iv. No. 1159.
Percival, J., *Some Helps for School Life*, 124.
Statham, S. M., *S. in Brief for a Year*, 139.
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JUDG. V. 24-31.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Women of the Bible:* O.T., 85.

JUDG. V. 28.

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JUDG. V. 31.

Butler, H. M., *University S.*, 278.
Johnston, S. M., *The Great Things of God*, i. 115.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 217.
— *The Beatitudes*, 199.
Newman, J. H., *Parochial and Plain S.*, iii. 173.
Oosterzee, J. J. van, *The Year of Salvation*, ii. 411.
Wray, J. J., *Honey in the Comb*, 245.
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JUDG. VI.

Brown, J. B., *The Sunday Afternoon*, 194.
Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 31.
Gordon, S. D., *Quiet Talks on Service*, 229.
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Parker, J., *The City Temple*, v. 313.

JUDG. VI. 11, 14, 15.

Morgan, E., *The Calls of God*, 101.

JUDG. VI. 11-16.

Smith, G. A., *The Forgiveness of Sins*, 192.

JUDG. VI. 12.

Lewis, H. E., in *Men of the O.T.:* Cain to David, 197.
Mackenzie, P., *Lectures and S.*, 99.
Neale, J. M., *S. in a Religious House*, ii. 374.
Pearse, M. G., *The Gentleness of Jesus*, 207.
Wharton, M. B., *Famous Men of the O.T.*, 115.
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JUDG. VI. 12, 13.

Leach, C., *Old Yet Ever New*, 133.

JUDG. VI. 13.

Campbell, J. M., *Bible Questions*, 41.
Dods, M., *Footsteps in the Path of Life*, 129.
Jacks, J., *A Great National Question*, 1.

JUDG. VI. 14.

Patten, J. A., *Faces Through the Mist*, 128.
Smellie, A., *In the Secret place*, 320.
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JUDG. VI. 17.

Clifford, J., *The Christian Certainties*, 57.

JUDG. VI. 22, 23.

Peabody, F. G., *Afternoons in the College Chapel*, 163.

JUDG. VI. 24.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 225.
— *Leaves from the Tree of Life*, 256.
Purves, P. C., *The Jehovah Titles of the O.T.*, 36.
Whitelaw, T., *Jehovah-Jesus*, 71.

JUDG. VI. 25.

Leach, C., *Old Yet Ever New*, 191
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxviii. 293 (G. E. Darlaston).

JUDG. VI. 25, 26.

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JUDG. VI. 31.

Leach, C., *Old Yet Ever New*, 201.

JUDG. VI. 34.

Fullerton, W. Y., *God's High Way*, 102.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 225.
Pearse, M. G., *The Gentleness of Jesus*, 217.
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JUDG. VI. 36-40.

Byrum, E. E., *The Secret of Prayer,* 187.
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JUDG. VI. 37.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 233.

JUDG. VI. 38, 40.

Vaughan, C. J., *The Presence of God,* 293.

JUDG. VI. 38-40.

Vaughan, J., *Family Prayer and S. Book,* i. 702.

JUDG. VI. 40.

Bell, C. D., *Night Scenes of the Bible,* i. 183.

JUDG. VII.

Brown, J. B., *The Sunday Afternoon,* 194.
Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age,* 31.
Gordon, S. D., *Quiet Talks on Service,* 229.

JUDG. VII.-VIII.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.,* 73.

JUDG. VII. 1-8.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 236.

JUDG. VII. 1-25.

Morrison, G. H., *The Footsteps of the Flock,* 113.

JUDG. VII. 2.

Selby, T. G., *The God of the Patriarchs,* 257.

JUDG. VII. 3.

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JUDG. VII. 4.

Murphy, J. B. C., *The Service of the Master,* 136.

JUDG. VII. 5, 6.

Inglis, J., *Bible Illustrations,* 36.

JUDG. VII. 5-7.

Cox, S., *The Bird's Nest,* 148.
Murphy, J. B. C., *The Service of the Master,* 143.

JUDG. VII. 7.

Brown, J. B., *The Sunday Afternoon,* 202.
Horne, C. S., *The Rock of Ages,* 137.
Jones, J. D., *The Unfettered Word,* 45.
McNeill, J., *Regent Square Pulpit,* ii. 273.
Newbolt, W. C. E., *Words of Exhortation,* 339.
Wright, W. B., *The World to Come,* 88.
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Davies, D., *Talks,* iv. 66.

JUDG. VII. 9.

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JUDG. VII. 13.

Campbell, R. J., *S. Addressed to Individuals,* 243.
Neale, J. M., *S. Preached in a Religious House,* i. 244.
— *Sackville College Chapel S.,* iii. 372.

JUDG. VII. 13-15.

Banks, L. A., *The Great Saints of the Bible,* 172.

JUDG. VII. 13-23.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 244.

JUDG. VII. 14.

Faithfull, R. C., *The Word of Christ,* 171.
Waller, C. H., *The Names on the Gates of Pearl,* 238.

JUDG. VII. 16.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 226.
Pearse, M. G., *The Gentleness of Jesus,* 227.
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Woodford, J. R., *Sermons:* O.T. Series, 54.
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Ferguson, F., *Sermons,* 107.
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JUDG. VII. 21.

Chapman, J. W., *And Judas Iscariot,* 113.
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JUDG. VII. 26.

Struthers, J. P., *The Word and the Road*, 47.

JUDG. VIII.

Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 31.

JUDG. VIII. 2.

Burrell, D. J., *A Quiver of Arrows*, 93.
— *The Spirit of the Age*, 173.
Peck, G. C., in *One Hundred Best S. for Special Days*, 361.
*Christian World Pulpit*, iv. 131 (A. F. Barfield; lvii. 382 (J. S. Maver).

JUDG. VIII. 4.

Aked, C. F., *Old Events and Modern Meanings*, 9.
Brown, J. B., *The Higher Life*, 288.
Merson, D., *Words of Life*, 242.
Pearse, M. G., *The Gentleness of Jesus*, 241.
Raleigh, A., *Quiet Resting Places*, 163.
Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence*, 387.
Wilson, S. L., *Helpful Words*, 194.
*Christian Commonwealth*, xxxv. 253 (R. J. Campbell).
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JUDG. VIII. 5.

Windross, H., *The Life Victorious*, 267.

JUDG. VIII. 18.

Gray, A. E. P., *Faith and Diligence*, 122.
Howatt, J. R., *The Children's Angel*, 194.

JUDG. VIII. 21.

Clifton, E. J., *Bible Illustrations from Persia*, 89.
Davidson, J. T., *The City Youth*, 69.
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JUDG. VIII. 27.

*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, ii. 14.

JUDG. VIII. 34.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 227.

JUDG. IX.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.*, 85.

JUDG. IX. 7-16, 19, 20.

Barry, A., *The Parables of the O.T.*, 63.

JUDG. IX. 7-21.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lxiii. 251 (J. O. Davies).

JUDG. IX. 8.

*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, ii. 17.

JUDG. IX. 8, 15.

Raleigh, A., *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, 132.

JUDG. IX. 8-15.

Cox, S., *An Expositor's Note Book*, 64.
Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 61.
Pearse, M. G., *The Bramble King*, 11.
Snell, B. J., *Citizenship and its Duties*, 3.

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Pearse, M. G., *The Bramble King*, 25.
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JUDG. IX. 14, 15.

Aked, C. F., *The Courage of the Coward*, 205.

JUDG. IX. 36.

Barry, C. J., *The Blurred Mirror*, 35.

JUDG. IX. 56.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 228.

JUDG. X. 6-XII. 7.

Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 91.

JUDG. X. 10.

Baker, E., *The Revivals of the Bible*, 18.

JUDG. X. 13.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 229.

JUDG. X. 14.

Parker, J., *The Ark of God*, 301.

JUDG. X. 16.

Taylor, J., *Cameos of Comfort*, 15.

JUDG. XI.

*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxvi. 167 (H. Jeffs).

JUDG. XI. 1.

Halsey, J., *The Spirit of Truth*, 200.

JUDG. XI. 1-33.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Women of the O.T.*, 99.

JUDG. XI. 7.

Parker, J., *Studies in Texts*, iii. 37.
Robinson, J. W., *Sunlit Hopes*, 127.

JUDG. XI. 11, 30.

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JUDG. XI. 30, 31.

MacGilvray, W., *The Ministry of the Word*, 30.
Nicholson, M., *Communion with Heaven*, 132.
Wharton, M. B., *Famous Men of the O.T.*, 131.
Gollancz, H., *S. and Addresses*, i. 150.

JUDG. XI. 34.

Dawson, W. J., *The Reproach of Christ*, 152.
Farningham, M., *Women and their Work*, 51.

JUDG. XI. 34-XII. 1-7.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.*, 111.

JUDG. XI. 35.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 230.
Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Lent to Passion-tide, 327.
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JUDG. XI. 36.

Mackay, W. M., *Bible Types of Modern Women*, 154.
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JUDG. XI. 39.

Greenhough, J. G., in *Women of the Bible:* Rebekah to Priscilla, 81.

JUDG. XII.

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JUDG. XII. 1.

Leach, C., *Old Yet Ever New*, 31.

JUDG. XII. 1-7.

Leach, C., *Sunday Afternoons with Working-Men*, 151.

JUDG. XII. 6.

Burrell, D. J., *The Golden Passional*, 286.
— *A Quiver of Arrows*, 210.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 231.
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JUDG. XIII.

Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 119.
Mackenzie, P., *Lectures and S.*, 169.
Rankin, J., *Character Studies in the O.T.*, 127.
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JUDG. XIII. 4.

Thorne, H., *Notable Sayings of the Great Teacher*, 160.

JUDG. XIII. 5.

Morgan, R. C., *The Cross in the O.T.*, 59.
Townsend, W. J., in *Men of the O.T.:* Cain to David, 213.

JUDG. XIII. 7.

Barton, G. A., *The Roots of Christian Teaching*, 146.

JUDG. XIII. 8.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 232.
Howatt, J. R., *The Children's Pulpit*, 266.

JUDG. XIII. 12.

Brown, A. G., *Forty S. from the Penny Pulpit*, No. 989.
Ewing, W., *Cedar and Palm*, 100.
Murray, A., *The Children for Christ*, 132.
Sereeton, F. A., *The Nation's Need of Prophets*, 40.
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JUDG. XIII. 16.

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JUDG. XIII. 18-22.

Vaughan, J., *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), i. No. 255.

JUDG. XIII. 22, 23.

Hutton, J. A., *On Accepting Ourselves*, 249.
Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Sundays after Trinity, i.—xii. 95.
Watkinson, W. L., *The Ashes of Roses*, 273.
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JUDG. XIII. 23.

Parker, J., *The Ark of God*, 253.
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JUDG. XIII. 24, 25.

Alexander, W., *The Great Question*, 145.
Tipple, S. A., *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, 72.
Vaughan, J., *S.* (*Brighton Pulpit*), xviii. No. 1131.

JUDG. XIII. 25.

Clifford, J., *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, 97.
Davies, D., *Talks*, v. 535.
Moffatt, J., *Reasons and Reasons*, 159.
Young, D. T., *Unfamiliar Texts*, 203.
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Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 119.
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JUDG. XIV.-XVI.

Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.*, 121.

JUDG. XIV. 5-9.

McNeill, J., *Regent Square Pulpit*, ii. 369.

JUDG. XIV. 5-20.

Barry, A., *The Parables of the O.T.*, 134.

JUDG. XIV. 6.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 233.
Richards, W. R., in *The Culture of Christian Manhood*, 118.
Young, D. T., *The Unveiled Evangel*, 76.

JUDG. XIV. 8.

*Children's Great Texts of the Bible*, ii. 23.
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JUDG. XIV. 8, 9.

Davies, T., *Sermons*, ii. 409.

JUDG. XIV. 10-19.

Bush, J., *Modern Thoughts on Ancient Stories*, 58.

JUDG. XIV. 14.

Longhurst, T. J., *The Royal Master*, 179.
MacArthur, R. S., *Quick Truths*, ii. 50.
Purves, G. T., *The Sinless Christ*, 73.
Thomas, J., *S.* (*Myrtle Street Pulpit*), iv. 243.
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JUDG. XV.

Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 119.

JUDG. XV. 1-6.

Inglis, J., *Bible Illustrations*, 45.

JUDG. XV. 10.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 234.

JUDG. XV. 11.

Black, J., *The Burthen of the Weeks*, 271.

JUDG. XV. 15.

Davies, D., *Talks*, iv. 425.

JUDG. XV. 19.

Smellie, A., *In the Secret Place*, 378.
Struthers, J. P., *The Word and the Road*, 77.

JUDG. XV. 20.

*Christian World Pulpit*, xx. 358 (E. P. Hood).

JUDG. XVI. 4-22.

Garvie, A. E., *A Course of Bible Study*, 98.

JUDG. XVI. 6.

Burrell, D. J., *God and the People*, 74.
— *A Quiver of Arrows*, 331.
Horan, F. S., *A Call to Seamen*, 106.
Ingram, A. F. W., *Into the Fighting Line*, 156.
Wilson, M. C., *Soldier's Fare*, 37.
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JUDG. XVI. 7-22.

Garvie, A. E., *A Course of Bible Study*, 98.

JUDG. XVI. 11, 14, 15.

Morgan, E., *The Calls of God*, 101.

JUDG. XVI. 16, 17.

Wright, W. B., *The World to Come*, 112.

JUDG. XVI. 17.

Liddon, H. P., *S.* (*The Penny Pulpit*), iv. No. 1111.
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JUDG. XVI. 19-22.

Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age*, 119.

JUDG. XVI. 20.

Ashby, L., *To Whom Shall We Go?*, 35.
Atkin, J. W., *The Paraklete*, 33.
Back, W. J., in *A Book of Lay S.*, 247.
Campbell, R. J., *S. Addressed to Individuals*, 73.
Clifford, J., *The Gospel of Gladness*, 54.
Forbes, J. T., *God's Measure*, 107.
Greenhough, J. G., *Half-Hours in God's Older Picture Gallery*, 89.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter*, i. 235.
Jenkinson, A., *A Modern Disciple*, 137.
Maclaren, A., *The God of the Amen*, 259.
Taylor, W. M., *The Limitations of Life*, 219.
Thomas, W. H. G., in *Keswick Week*, 1899, p. 37.
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Wilson, S. L., *Helpful Words*, 302.
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Clifton, E. J., *Bible Illustrations from Persia,* 112.

JUDG. XVI. 21-31.
Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 250.
Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.,* 135.
Morrison, G. H., *The Footsteps of the Flock,* 121.
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JUDG. XVI. 26.
Simpson, H. L., *Put Forth by the Moon,* 97.

JUDG. XVI. 27.
Clifton, E. J., *Bible Illustrations from Persia,* 94.

JUDG. XVI. 28.
Horne, C. S., *The Soul's Awakening,* 265.
Parker, J., *The City Temple Pulpit,* iii. 32.
Stanton, A. H., *S. Outlines,* ii. 22.
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JUDG. XVI. 30.
Brooks, P., *The Law of Growth,* 253.
Neale, J. M., *Sackville College Chapel S.,* iii. 388.
Stanley, A. P., *S. on Special Occasions,* 274.

JUDG. XVI. 31.
Wardell, R. J., *Studies in Homiletics,* 191.

JUDG. XVII.-XVIII.
Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.,* 145.

JUDG. XVII. 1, 2.
Inglis, J., *Bible Illustrations,* 54.

JUDG. XVII. 6.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 236.

JUDG. XVII. 9, 10.
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JUDG. XVII. 10.
Brown, J. B., *Idolatries,* 29.

JUDG. XVII. 13.
Greenhough, J. G., *Half-Hours in God's Older Picture Gallery,* 97.
Jones, J. S., *Saved by Hope,* 51.
*Christian Age,* xlvi. 306 (W. H. Allbright).

JUDG. XVIII. 3.
Vaughan, J. S., *Earth to Heaven,* 28.

JUDG. XVIII. 7.
Horne, C. S., *The Rock of Ages,* 125.
*Children's Great Texts of the Bible,* ii. 35.

JUDG. XVIII. 9, 10.
Neale, J. M., *Sackville College Chapel S.,* ii. 330.

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Cuyler, T. L., *Stirring the Eagle's Nest,* 225.

JUDG. XVIII. 24.
Dykes, J. O., *Plain Words on Great Themes,* 187.
Hutton, W. R., *Low Spirits,* 160.
Wilson, S. L., *Helpful Words,* 266.
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JUDG. XVIII. 26, 27.
James, F., *A National Pentecost,* 80.

JUDG. XVIII. 31.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 237.

JUDG. XIX.-XXI.
Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Men of the O.T.,* 157.

JUDG. XIX. 6.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 238.

JUDG. XX. 16.
Clifton, E. J., *Bible Illustrations from Persia,* 130.
*New York Treasury,* xi. 845 (S. T. Graham).

JUDG. XX. 23.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 239.

JUDG. XX. 23, 25.
Matheson, G., *Thoughts for Life's Journey,* 127.

JUDG. XXI. 3.
*Christian World Pulpit,* liii. 164 (J. Parker).

JUDG. XXI. 8.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 240.

JUDG. XXI. 16-25.
Dods, M., *Israel's Iron Age,* 149.

JUDG. XXI. 25.
Henson, H. H., *Light and Leaven,* 87.
Wilson, M. C., *Soldiers' Fare,* 130.

# RUTH

## COMMENTARIES FOR REFERENCE

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BLACK, A., *Ruth:* A Hebrew Idyl (1906).
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## INDEX TO SERMONS

RUTH 1.

Hasell, E. J., *Bible Partings,* 125.

RUTH I.-IV.

*Christian World Pulpit,* lv. 42 (E. G. Jones).

RUTH I. 1.

Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 1.
Hutton, J. A., *The Victory over Victory,* 39.
*Expositor,* 6th ser., v. 360 (A. Black).

RUTH I. 1-5.

*Expositor,* ii. 81 (S. Cox).

RUTH I. 1-8.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xcii. 11 (W. H. Burgess).

RUTH I. 1-22.

Morrison, G. H., *The Footsteps of the Flock,* 128.

RUTH I. 5.

Dawson, J. E. Le S., *Lenten Readings on the Book of Ruth,* 1.

RUTH I. 6.

Hancock, T., *The Pulpit and the Press,* 113.
Snell, B. J., in *Jesus in the Cornfield,* 159.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Harvest Thanksgiving, xxii. 35 (B. J. Snell).

RUTH I. 6-18.

Leach, C., *Sunday Afternoons with Working Men,* 139.

RUTH I. 6-22.

*Expositor,* ii. 92 (S. Cox).

RUTH I. 8.

Singer, S., *S. and Memoir,* 42.
*Jewish Chronicle,* May 14, 1915.

RUTH I. 8, 9.

Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 13.

RUTH I. 11.

Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 15.

RUTH I. 14.

Aglionby, F. K., *The Better Choice,* 1.
Bonar, H., *Light and Truth:* O.T., 104.
Macgregor, W. M., *Repentance Unto Life,* 188.
Simpson, Mrs. A. R., *Friends and Friendship,* 46.
Smellie, A., *In the Hour of Silence,* 329.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* 4th Sunday after Trinity, x. 181 (J. W. Shepard).

RUTH I. 14, 15.

Dawson, J. E. Le S., *Lenten Readings on the Book of Ruth,* 12.

RUTH I. 15.

*New York Treasury,* xxi. 528 (A. Kuyper).

RUTH I. 15-17.

Gibbon, J. M., *The Veil and the Vision,* 187.

RUTH I. 16.

Banks, L. A., *The Great Saints of the Bible,* 184.
Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 33.
Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 25.
Clegg, A., *The Throne and the Voice,* 12.
Cooke, S., in *Living Voices of Living Men,* 64.
Farningham, M., *Women and their Work,* 56.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 241.

Lewis, A., *S. preached in England,* 192.
M'Cheyne, R. M., *Additional Remains,* 267.
Mackay, W. M., *Bible Types of Modern Women,* 229.
McNeill, J., *Regent Square Pulpit,* iii. 185.
Miller, T. E., *Portraits of Women of the Bible:* O.T., 94.
Norton, J. N., *Every Sunday,* 249.
Wickham, E. C., *Words of Light and Life,* 302.
*Christian World Pulpit,* xxx. 196 (H. D. Rawnsley); xlix. 401 (J. Stalker).
*Churchman's Pulpit:* 4th Sunday after Trinity, x. 183 (A. Lewis), 186 (C. M. Southgate), 188 (W. Moister).
*Church Pulpit Year Book,* xiv. 171.
*Clergyman's Magazine,* 3rd ser., xi. (1896) 351.
*New York Treasury,* xxi. 801 (G. B. F. Hallock).

RUTH I. 16, 17.

Bell, C. D., *The Name Above Every Name,* 152.
Brown, A. G., *Thou Remainest,* 104.
Davies, D., *Talks,* vi. 165.
Rankin, J., *Character Studies in the O.T.,* 85.
Wakinshaw, W., *The Vow of Ruth,* 9.
Williams, J. P., *The Duty of Exercise,* 45.
*Christian World Pulpit,* ix. 241 (T. de W. Talmage); lxxviii. 58 (C. Davis).
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RUTH I. 16-18.

Dawson, J. E. Le S., *Lenten Readings on the Book of Ruth,* 25.

RUTH I. 16-22.

Maclaren, A., *Expositions:* Deuteronomy, etc., 259.
Pentecost, G. F., *Bible Studies for* 1888, p. 337.

RUTH I. 19.

Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 51, 67.
Burns, D., *The Song of the Well,* 21.
Farningham, M., *Women and their Work,* 60.
Leach, C., *Old Yet Ever New,* 170.
Lynd, R. J., in *S. Year Book,* i. 282.
*Contemporary Pulpit,* 2nd ser., vi. 61 (R. J. Lynd).

RUTH I. 20.

*Literary Churchman,* 1883, p. 351 (W. Fraser).

RUTH I. 20, 21.

Snape, T., in *A Book of Lay S.,* 33.

RUTH I. 21.

Meharry, J. B., *From Natural to Spiritual,* 102.

RUTH I. 22.

Alexander, W., in *Expository S. and Outlines on the O.T.,* 96.

RUTH II.

Bush, J., *Modern Thoughts on Ancient Stories,* 66.

RUTH II. 1-4.

Dawson, J. E. Le S., *Lenten Readings on the Book of Ruth,* 40.

RUTH II. 1-23.

Cox, S., *The Book of Ruth,* 83.
Morrison, G. H., *The Footsteps of the Flock,* 136.
*Expositor,* ii. 165 (S. Cox).

RUTH II. 2.

Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 83.
Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 37.
Vaughan, C. J., *The Family Prayer and S. Book,* i. 727.
— *Voices of the Prophets,* 55.

RUTH II. 3.

Farningham, M., *Women and their Work,* 64.

RUTH II. 3, 4.

Neale, J. M., *S. preached in a Religious House,* ii. 346.

RUTH II. 4.

Edmunds, L., *Sunday by Sunday,* 329.
Keble, J., *S. for the Christian Year:* Sundays after Trinity, ii. 97.
Kingsley, C., *The Water of Life,* 111.
Macmillan, H., in *Jesus in the Cornfield,* 23.
Paget, F. E., *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life,* ii. 201.
Sowter, G. A., *Sowing and Reaping,* 118.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* Harvest Thanksgiving, xxii. 37; 40 (H. Macmillan).
*Literary Churchman,* 1887, p. 337 (J. E. Vernon).

RUTH II. 4-8.

Gamble, H. R., in *In the Time of Harvest,* 169.

RUTH II. 7.

*Children's Great Texts of the Bible,* ii. 40.

RUTH II. 9.

Rees, J. S., *S. from a Little Known Pulpit,* 20.
Smith, J. D., *The Brides of Scripture,* 78.

RUTH II. 10.

Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 49.

RUTH II. 11.

*Children's Great Texts of the Bible,* ii. 51.

RUTH II. 11, 12.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xxx. 196 (H. D. Rawnsley).

RUTH II. 12.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xxiv. 213 (W. Hubbard).

RUTH II. 12, 13.

Banks, L. A., *The Great Saints of the Bible,* 331.

RUTH II. 13.

Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 101.

RUTH II. 14, 18.

Mackenzie, W. L., *Pure Religion,* 47.

RUTH II. 15, 16.

*Christian Age,* xlii. 274 (L. Abbott).

RUTH II. 16.

Alexander, A., *The Glory in the Grey,* 193.
Stalberg, I. O., *The Lamp of Friendship,* 73.
*Sunday Magazine,* 1892, p. 711 (J. R. Howatt).

RUTH II. 17.

Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 119.
Devenish, E. J., *Like Apples of Gold,* 53.
Rawnsley, R. D. B., *Village S.,* iii. 119.

RUTH II. 17-21.

Walker, G., *For the Great Cause,* 136.

RUTH II. 18.

*Church and Synagogue,* ii. (1912) 102 (H. F. B. Compston).

RUTH II. 19.

Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 139.
Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 59.
Campbell, J. M., *Bible Questions,* 10.
Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 242.
Macleay, K. A., *The Never-Changing Creed,* 231.
McNeill, J., *Regent Square Pulpit,* ii. 97.
*Literary Churchman,* 1890, p. 115 (W. H. Jones).

RUTH II. 20.

Cox, S., *The Book of Ruth,* 164.
*Church Times,* May 7, 1915 (E. E. Holmes).

RUTH III. 1.

Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 69.
Farningham, M., *Women and their Work,* 68.
*Christian World Pulpit,* xxxii. 91 (C. T. Price).

RUTH III. 1, 18.

Webb-Peploe, H. W., *The Life of Privilege,* 130.

RUTH III. 1-18.

Cox, S., *The Book of Ruth,* 103.

RUTH III. 3.

Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 81, 93.

RUTH III 4.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 243.

RUTH III 9.

Macgregor, G. H. C., *Messages of the O.T.,* 101.
Vaughan, J. S., *Earth to Heaven,* 15.

RUTH III. 12, 13.

Dawson, J. E. Le S., *Lenten Readings on the Book of Ruth,* 58.

RUTH III. 14.

Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 157.
Nash, L. L., *Early Morning Scenes in the Bible,* 112.

RUTH III. 18.

Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 105.
Meyer, F. B., *From Calvary to Pentecost,* 93.

RUTH IV. 1-22.

Cox, S., *The Book of Ruth,* 123.

RUTH IV. 10.

Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 173.
Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 117.

RUTH IV. 11.

Cooper, J., *Bethlehem,* 20.

RUTH IV. 13.

Holden, J. S., *Chapter by Chapter,* i. 244.
Webb-Peploe, H. W., *The Life of Privilege,* 130.

RUTH IV. 13, 16.

Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 191.

RUTH IV. 13-17.

Dawson, J. E. Le S., *Lenten Readings on the Book of Ruth,* 72.

RUTH IV. 14-17.

*Christian World Pulpit,* viii. 381 (G. B. Ryley).

RUTH IV. 15.

*Christian World Pulpit,* xcix. 113 (T. O. Edwards).

RUTH IV. 16.

Farningham, M., *Women and their Work,* 72.

RUTH IV. 16, 17.

Briggs, H., *S. on the Book of Ruth,* 129.

RUTH IV. 21, 22.

Black, A., *The Book of Ruth,* 207.

# INDEX TO ARTICLES

Courage, 155.
Fighting, 287.
Forgetting, 337.
The Training of the Child. 398
Unpossessed Possessions, 259.

# LITERATURE FOR ARTICLES

## FIGHTING.

Brierley, J., *The Secret of Living*, 263.
Campbell, R. J., *The War and the Soul*, 58.
Davidson, J. T., *Sure to Succeed*, 117.
Drever, J., *Instinct in Man*, 157.
Greer, D. H., *From Things to God*, 137.
Herrick, S. E., in *The Culture of Christian Manhood*, 233.
Hitchcock, R. D., *Eternal Atonement*, 193.
Horne, C. S., in *Sermons and Addresses*, 90.
— *The Rock of Ages*, 197.
Hyde, W. de W., *The Five Great Philosophies of Life*, 270.
Jenkinson, A., *A Modern Disciple*, 253.
Lilley, A. L., *The Religion of Life*, 212.
Macleod, D., *Christ and Society*, 25, 213.
Maurice, F. D., *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, i. 279.
Meyer, F. B., *Tried by Fire*, 84, 205.
Newbolt, W. C. E., *The Cardinal Virtues*, 189.
Nicoll, W. R., *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, 134.
Phillips, T., in *Free Ch. Year Book*, 1915, p. 25.
Russell, A., *The Light that Lighteth Every Man*, 167.
Skrine, J. H., *Saints and Worthies*, 66.
Stubbs, C. W., *Pro Patria*, 16.
Trinder, D., in *Sermons for the People*, vi. 178.
Waddell, R., *Behold the Lamb of God!* 233.
Walker, G., *For the Great Cause*, 1, 24, 38.
Young, D. T., *The Unveiled Evangel*, 123.
*Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxi. 113 (H. Rashdall); lxxxviii. 393.
*Churchman's Pulpit:* 3rd Sunday after Easter, viii. 107 (R. W. Dale).
*Interpreter*, xii. 337 (H. Johnson).

## FORGETTING.

Abbott, L., *The Great Companion*, 131.
Broughton, L. G., *Christianity and the Commonplace*, 105.
Burrell, D. J., *Christ and Men*, 202.
Cowan, R., *The Weakness of God*, 179.
Dale, W., *Short Studies on Bible Subjects*, 41.
Duncan, J., *In the Pulpit and at the Communion Table*, 435.
Farrar, F. W., *True Religion*, 59.
Jordan, W. G., *Crown of Individuality*, 122.
Jowett, J. H., *Apostolic Optimism*, 247.
— *Things that Matter Most*, 208.
Maclaren, A., *Psalms*, ii (Expositor's Bible), 63.
— *Expositions:* Psalms i. to xlix., 317.
— *Expositions:* St. Matthew, xviii. to xxviii., 37.
— *The Wearied Christ*, 158.
Masterman, J. H. B., *Sunday Epistles*, 76.
Morrison, G. H., *Flood-Tide*, 179.
— *The Oldest Trade in the World*, 103.
Morrow, H. W., *Questions Asked and Answered by Our Lord*, 204.
Peabody, F. G., *Mornings in the College Chapel*, ii., 92.
Pierce, C. C., *The Hunger of the Heart for Faith*, 24.
Raleigh, A., *Quiet Resting Places*, 106.
Shepherd, A., *Bible Studies in Living Subjects*, 3.
Vaughan, C. J., *University S. New and Old*, 104.
Watkinson, W. L., *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, 12.
*Christian World Pulpit*, xlix., 72 (J. Stalker); liv., 42 (W. Park), 49 (H. S. Holland); lxiii., 337 (H. S. Holland); lxiv., 241 (G. F. Browne).
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## THE TRAINING OF THE CHILD.

Barber, W. T. A., *The Unfolding of Life.*
Carnill, C. H., *The Culture of Anc. Israel*, 68.
Gordon, S. D., and M. G., *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 229.
Home, H., *The Child Mind.*
Lyttelton, E., *Mothers and Sons.*
Macdonald, G., *The Child's Inheritance.*
Mellor, E., *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, 52.
Wroe, M. A., *Thoughts on the Training of Children.*
*Essays on Duty and Discipline*, i. 65 (Mrs. A. Phillp).
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